

Interview with Dayton S. Mak

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

DAYTON S. MAK

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Q: Dayton, could you give an idea of a little bit about your background prior to coming into the Foreign Service?

MAK: Yes, certainly. Well, I was born in South Dakota—in Sioux Falls, South Dakota—of parents who were born and raised in the state of Iowa.

My father was a small-town banker in South Dakota, and we spent a few years there, then moved from a small town in Iowa to another, my father going from bank to bank and sort of up and up. He later on established his own brokerage business in the town of Waterloo, Iowa, where I was raised.

I then went to school during the Depression to what was then the Iowa State Teachers College, which was in Cedar Falls, adjacent to Waterloo. It's now known as the University of Northern Iowa. After two years I went on to the University of Arizona. Why University of Arizona? Well, it seemed that that terrible climate of Iowa had given me a dose of sinus trouble and catarrh which I couldn't quite combat, so we thought going out to a dry climate would help, and it certainly did. After the University, I got a job with the Illinois Central Railroad in Chicago.

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Q: This was when?

MAK: This would be 1939.

Q: You were born when?

MAK: 1917, in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

I worked for the Illinois Central Railroad in the accounting department. They called it something else—the office of the comptroller. I was assistant traveling auditor-in-training, in other words. I enjoyed it very much.

Then World War II came along, and I was drafted from Chicago, sent to Camp Davis, went to Officers Training School, became an officer, was shipped out to Oran, Algeria to a repo-depot, then was assigned to a separate battalion, an anti-aircraft separate battalion. We tromped through North Africa and on up through Italy; and after shooting down our share of German planes over Anzio, we were retrained as infantry.

From Anzio, refitted as infantry, we marched up through the mountains of Italy, primarily along the west coast, to Genoa. After the Germans surrendered, I was sent home on leave and then assigned to Fort Bliss for reassignment abroad.

Q: This is because the war was not over with Japan at that point?

MAK: That's right. While I was there in Fort Bliss in Texas waiting to be sent to Japan, the atomic bombs were dropped, and the war ended, and I went home.

How I got into the Foreign Service was rather interesting to me. When I was on leave from Fort Bliss, I saw in the post office a poster inviting military personnel to take the Foreign Service exam for service abroad. This intrigued me. Military people were going to be given

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an abbreviated exam for the job of FSO, and we had to apply through our commanding officers to take an exam.

I applied, but my commanding officer was on leave then and never forwarded my application; so I didn't get my application in on time. Meanwhile I was discharged from the Army, and I was determined that I was going to become a Foreign Service Officer. I must say that before the war, during my college days, I had scarcely heard of a Foreign Service Officer, and it certainly never entered my head to become one. But my service in North Africa and Italy sparked my interest in foreign lands, and I was determined then to become an FSO.

I was too late to take the exam, so I thought, "Well, the next thing to do is to study foreign affairs." So I applied for SAIS, which had just been established here in Washington.

Q: Would you spell that out?

MAK: School of Advanced International Studies, which is now part of Johns Hopkins here in Washington. It wasn't then; it was independent. But there again I applied too late. Meanwhile, I worked in my father's brokerage business in Waterloo Iowa.

I thought, "Well, I've got to hurry this thing up," so I decided to go to Washington and perhaps attend George Washington University under the G.I. Bill of Rights and study things that might help me in the foreign service. And I also thought it a good idea to touch base with my congressman, who had beaten my father out for Congress some years back and had been a classmate of his at the University of Iowa. Both he and his wife were classmates of my mother and father at the University and good friends.

So I went to call on him, and he invited me to lunch. I told him what I was planning to do, and he said, "Well, I have a good friend who's in the Foreign Service." He brought along this friend to the lunch. The upshot was that the friend said, "Oh, I know that they're

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recruiting now for temporary officers to serve in Germany; would you be interested in that?"

I said, "Sure." So I went in and saw Findley Burns, whom I later got to know very well. Findley interviewed me and said, "Well, I'll let you hear in due time."

So I went back to Waterloo and worked with my father hating every minute of it. I didn't hear from Washington, so I thought, "Well, I better go in and find out." So I got on the train, went to Washington, called on Findley. He said, "Oh, did you get my letter?"

And I said, "No."

He said, "Well, we offered you a commission."

And I said, "Well, the trains must have crossed, because it hadn't arrived when I left."

Anyway, he said, "Fill out the application forms etc., and report here for your consular training." I guess it was early March.

Q: This is of—

MAK: 1946. So I did so, and I reported and was given a reserve commission as vice consul to go to Hamburg, which was in the British zone of occupied Germany. So I was sent off to Hamburg as vice consul, along with a number of other ex-Army people and Consul David McKillop. There were Frank Galbraith, Fred Armstrong, Bill Kelly and Bill O'Donnell. We all served in Hamburg under Consul General Edward Groth and became known as "Groth's Boys" there in Hamburg.

Q: What type of work were you doing?

MAK: Hamburg had been an important consulate before the war, and we were reopening the consulate, so from the very beginning we had to go through step one. I was appointed

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administrative officer. Another was put in charge of the visa section, another in charge of passports, another in charge of general consular affairs, etc. As I knew nothing about consular financial or administrative matters I was sent to Berlin to talk to our consulate people there and learn from them what would be helpful in setting up CG Hamburg.

In Berlin I got all the proper forms and learned how to pay people, and how to keep the accounts etc. The job made pretty easy by the presence of many of the pre-war staff who'd been doing the same thing, managing our accounts, before the war at the consulate, and subsequently with the Swiss who handled our interests in Hamburg and in Germany during the war. All I really had to do was provide a slight bit of guidance to Erna Kasperek, who then raced ahead and did everything beautifully.

Q: Hamburg was practically destroyed during the war, wasn't it? Did we have any building? What was our situation?

MAK: Well, it was a strange situation. Hamburg was fire bombed, and desperately fire bombed. They lost something over, I think, a hundred-and-some thousand people killed, which meant that a good share of the city was absolutely flat; it was nothing but rubble. But strangely enough, the nicer parts of Hamburg, including the center of the town around the Alster, were pretty much left intact. Even the main railroad station, although it had lost some of its glass, was basically intact and functioning. The shipyards, of course, which were a few miles from the center of town, were very badly bombed as were other things, but in the center of town you could walk through vast areas that seemed to be untouched.

Q: What was the attitude of the Germans? I mean, here we'd just gone through a war and you talk about 100,000 people lost in Hamburg. What was the attitude towards the Americans, I mean, towards you all there?

MAK: Well, first of all it seemed to me that the Germans were absolutely numb. In a way, they were starving. They had almost no food. I can remember seeing nothing but mounds

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and mounds of cabbages. That seemed to be about all they had to eat. There was nothing to buy in the shops, and rationing was absolutely strict.

They tended to move around their business, but very lethargically. They were really almost refugees in their own country. Their attitude toward the Americans—we were very few; we were only a handful. That area was occupied by the British Army. The Germans always managed in those days to show a certain amount of deference to any captor and they did that, but it wasn't unpleasant and it wasn't exactly sullen. It was completely lethargic. Everyone looked and acted completely numb.

They were friendly to us. I mean, they weren't outwardly friendly, but if you talked to them, they were polite. They were mainly just numb. There was not much of a basis for any friendship with them there, and we officers had some experience in the Army or in the Armed Forces, and we weren't terribly keen on cozying up to them anyway. It was too near the end of the war. But I would say their attitude was purely correct, nothing more, nothing less.

Q: What was our consulate doing in Hamburg in those days?

MAK: Basically we were just opening the consulate. There was very little that we could do. We did make trips out to sort of report on the agriculture situation. There wasn't much to report on in the industry going, because that was very tightly controlled anyway by the British and the tripartite groups. There was a number of American expatriates there, particularly American-born wives of Germans, who at that point wanted to renew their citizenship and come back to the States, at least temporarily, where there was some food and get out of the hell that Germany was at the time, so that was a pretty important thing. Of course, most of them had renounced—not necessarily renounced their American citizenship, but they had made various acts of expatriation.

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Q: Also, there was a law at the time where they'd lost their citizenship by marrying a foreigner, too. Wasn't that still in effect or not?

MAK: Well, actually, they could get it back if they had not made an overt act, such as, renouncing their American citizenship, voting in the German election or taking an oath in the German Army. So I know that we expatriated a number of American-born women who wanted to return to the U.S. but who had voted in the first elections after the war, but by so doing, they lost their American citizenship.

Q: How were your relations with the British? You were a small group there, and was this a difficult relationship or a good one?

MAK: It was a very easy relationship. They were very good to us. We were a very small group, as you know. We didn't get in their hair; we didn't bother them. All we wanted from them was a place to live and a place for our office and some work permits for the people that we needed to work for us. No, they couldn't have been better. Socially they were very friendly, and officially they were friendly. I presume that there was a bit of reciprocity involved because they were serving under our people in the American zone, as well. No, they couldn't have been better.

Q: Moving on to really the focus of your career was Arabic. You left Hamburg in 1948. How did you get into Arabic?

MAK: While I was in Hamburg, a notice came out that the Department was going to set up a school for Arabic language studies, and they were interested in getting volunteers to study Arabic. Well, as I said earlier, I was intrigued by North Africa, and I rather liked it. I didn't like what I had to do there, but I found it very fascinating. The whole culture, which I didn't go deeply into, mind you, I found of great interest. So I thought, "This might be a very interesting thing to do," so I applied for Arabic language training, and bingo, I got it. People weren't pounding at the doors to take Arabic language training.

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So after two years in Hamburg, I was sent to Washington to start in the first Arabic language study class at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington. A preliminary course had been held in Beirut under Dr. Charles Ferguson, who was the professor in charge of the program and who was formulating the program pretty much as we went along. We were generally just one lesson behind him. He was building the next lesson as we finished the first lesson.

There were about five of us there: Carl Walstrom, David Gamon, David Fritzlan, Narlon Clark, Rodger Davies, and I. We were the first group there. It was tough. The course was only six months long, but we ended up with a pretty good basic knowledge of street Arabic-Syrian-Lebanese Arabic. This would be considered perfectly inadequate by today's standards of what they teach in the Foreign Service Institute now. But we had a good basis, I was then sent to Saudi Arabia.

Q: And this is 1948. You went first to Dhahran.

MAK: That's right.

Q: A post where ten years later I served in Dhahran in 1958.

MAK: Dhahran in those days was a little Levitt-type town plunked in the desert with hardly anything growing. It was a miserable place; nothing but sand and sandstorms.

Q: Well, you were there just really a very short time.

MAK: Yes. We had an inspector come out, Larry Frank, who discovered a lot of things about the consulate. One, that it was no place for an Arabist—or budding Arabist—to learn Arabic, because you were living in this community of Americans—

Q: Described as being equivalent to being stationed in Tulsa.

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MAK: That's right, yes, except not as pretty. Yes, it was really pretty hopeless.

Q: We're talking because of the American oil camp and all, which dominated the area. There wasn't really much of an Arab community there.

MAK: No, there wasn't. The only time you ever met any Arabs was when you'd go bouncing over in your balloon tired jeep to Al Khobar, which then looked like an abandoned Hopi village in the west. Or to Dammam, which was full of mud houses and the so-called palace of the Emir Abdul Mohsen bin Jaluwi. It really was no place to learn Arabic, and Larry Frank, God bless him, got me out of there and sent me to Jeddah after about three or four months.

Q: The ambassador there was Rives Childs?

MAK: J. Rives Childs, yes.

Q: What was he like to work with?

MAK: Well, Childs was a jolly fellow. He was very bright and very much down to earth. He let you pretty much do your own things. He did set the guidelines on the reporting that he wanted, but he let you do it. He gave you really full rein. He was very pleasant and he knew how to get along with the Arabs. Furthermore, he knew how to get along with us in this difficult environment. I liked him very much.

Q: What were you doing?

MAK: First of all, I was made administrative officer. Mind you, at this time I'd taken and passed the Foreign Service exam in Hamburg, failed the orals, taken the written again, this time passed the orals and was waiting for my appointment as FSO. But the Department didn't have the funds to make all of us Foreign Service Officers, so I was sent out to Dhahran as a staff officer.

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Q: This is a Foreign Service staff officer.

MAK: Yes, that's right. I was first sent to Dhahran and then transferred to Jeddah, where I was made administrative officer. I did that for a while, and then I was made economic officer. There wasn't a lot of reporting to do. It really turned out to be primarily following up on trade opportunities. Those, strangely enough, turned out to be largely business contacts between Jewish companies in the U.S. who wanted to do business with Arab merchants, primarily to ship them used clothing for resale to pilgrims and others in the Jeddah market.

Q: I have to add here that even ten years later, pants weren't used, but old coats. You'd see Army coats of every nation there, and vests were a big item and suit coats.

MAK: Yes. Well, that's exactly it. They never stopped. And those came primarily, in my day anyway, from Jewish merchants in New York.

Q: Well, you were there in '48, '49, during the formation of Israel. Here you were one of the first group of Arabists and all. What was the attitude of the embassy? Here you were in a country which was just livid because of the creation of Israel. What was the situation as you saw it and the people around you at the embassy saw this recognition of Israel, creation of Israel, and all that?

MAK: Well, that was interesting. There had been a Saudi contingent to help fight the Israelis, or the Jews, and had just returned, and they returned very, very quietly and were encamped in what they call the gishla. This was an Army barracks near the town wall and near where our embassy was at the time.

The main reaction was one of almost no discernible reaction on the part of the local populace. That did not seem to be a problem to them and they did not seem to be

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particularly concerned about it. They looked more to their immediate interests, which was trade.

Q: This is the Hejaz, which is the, I guess we'd call the western part.

MAK: Right. The Hejazis considered themselves to be sophisticated, where as those out in the Nejd where the Saudis came from—or where the Saud family came from—they were considered to be desert, bedouin warriors with no culture. These people in Jeddah were merchants, and they were interested primarily in making money off the Hajj and controlling the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

Q: The Hajj being the pilgrimage, the yearly pilgrimage to Mecca.

MAK: Their society was built on servicing the pilgrimages, that and playing merchant. They really were not interested on what went on up north, and they were particularly not happy with Egypt and what was going on in Egypt at the time. The Palestine problem did not seem to be of major concern at least as far as we could determine.

Q: Were the Saudi rulers trying to stir up the populace to turn this into a jihad or not?

MAK: No. Now, here you're pushing me a little really beyond my knowledge. Our Ambassador Rives Childs, or Hermann Eilts and Bill Brewer, who were in the political section at the time, would have had a better understanding of this than I, but my impression was that the Saudis were interested primarily in, getting the oil going in the eastern province—solving their production problems with ARAMCO. They were more concerned about distrust of the Hashemites, the rulers of Jordan, their relations with Syria and their dislike of Egypt and the revolutionary forces in control there than anything else. They were looking more for solidifying their own power in their own country than they were getting involved in regional affairs.

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Q: Moving really from the Saudis and all, let's look—because I think this is important because there's an impression that an Arabist per se as—I'm speaking of an American Foreign Service person concentrating on the Arabic world—is opposed to Israel. How did you feel? I mean, this thing happened, this creation of Israel. You and the men who were also becoming Arabists in an Arab capital, how did you feel about this at the time? What was sort of the table conversation about developments there?

MAK: Do you mean table conversations between us and the local people?

Q: No. Between you and Hermann Eilts and Bill Brewer and the ambassador and all that.

MAK: I see. Well, we had all been imbued, associating with Arabs in our studies and so forth, with an understanding of the Arab point of view. As such, we felt that their point of view had been neglected almost completely for political reasons and emotional reasons, having to do with World War II and our American general attitude.

Q: You're speaking in the United States?

MAK: In the United States, yes. We felt that the Palestinians had been done in by everybody concerned. We understood the reasons for it and could sympathize with it. Anyone who had been in Germany after the war could sympathize with the plight of the Jews, particularly if you'd been in Hamburg. They tried to run ships from Hamburg to Palestine and some of them were sent back. A lot of were lost. But basically our attitude was pro-Arab. There's no question about that.

Q: Looking back on it, do you feel that maybe you were overcompensating for the fact that there was an almost dearth of input as far as what the other side of the political clash over Israel was?

MAK: I don't know whether this is answering your question or not, but in hindsight, I think that we were oversold on the Arab point of view. I'm not saying that I think the

Library of Congress

Arab point of view is wrong, because for an Arab, it's absolutely right. But for a Jew, on the other hand, his side is absolutely right. I wasn't an Arab or a Jew; I was a State Department officer. And I think it behooves us to follow the policies and act on the policies as established by the people whom we are representing.

And I think that's a lesson to be remembered. It's so easy to live in the Arab world and become more Arab than the Arabs, or live in Austria and become more Austrian, or Holland, more Dutch, any of that thing. It is a disease that is easy to catch in the Foreign Service, or in any other endeavor where you're living with foreign people. You're going to adopt their attitudes toward basic issues.

Q: You left Jeddah in 1950 and went to language training at the University of Pennsylvania?

MAK: The University of Pennsylvania. It was primarily Arab, or rather regional, studies. I did take Arabic, written Arabic, but in one year, you're not going to learn much written Arabic. I studied and improved my Arabic, but it was mainly regional studies, both at the University of Pennsylvania and at the Dropsie College of Hebrew and Cognate learning in Philadelphia, which is obviously a Jewish college and of considerable stature. They gave some very good courses which they let us attend free. Hermann Eilts and I were there at the same time.

Q: On coming back, you went to Washington, where you were assigned to the Libyan—no, you went to Tripoli?

MAK: I went to Libya first, yes.

Q: Where you served from 1951 to '54?

MAK: Right.

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Q: What were you doing in Tripoli? This was a normal assignment, I assume.

MAK: Yes. I was an FSO, and I was sent there as economic officer. There wasn't a lot to do. Libya became independent from the Italians and then from the British, French and so forth in December—I think it was Christmas Day—1951.

Economic reporting consisted primarily of reporting on such things as the tuna industry, esparto grass and the reconstruction of their little railroad and a bit about the resurrection of the Italian farms out in the hinterland, but not much else. Shortly afterwards, I became political officer.

There we had as our main job the renegotiation of the Wheelus Air Base Agreement near Tripoli. Libya had two things on its mind at that time. One was establishing itself as a constitutional monarchy, which involved establishing a parliament, conducting elections in the various provinces (there were three provinces of Libya) deciding where the king was going to make his capital (King Idris was chosen by sort of unanimous acclaim) where he was going to live, which was going to be the predominant province section: was it going to be Cyrenaica or was it going to be Tripolitania?; and, of course, how much the Americans and the British were going to contribute to the budget of the new Libyan nation. As the British were pretty threadbare after the war, it was up to the Americans then, to provide funds for the Libyans, and that amount would have to be negotiated.

Q: Of course, we're speaking of a time when oil was just not there.

MAK: No. There wasn't anything there, really. Esparto grass was their main export.

Q: Esparto grass?

MAK: Esparto grass is a grass that grows wild there. It's good for making bank notes. It was sold to the United States, Britain, and other places, primarily to make bank notes.

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The British had been occupying the two provinces, Cyrenaica and Tripolitania and the French were occupying and administering the Fezzan, the southern part, and all of them left troops there for several reasons. One is they didn't have anywhere else to go at the time; and two, the Russians were causing problems in the world and all of the Allies were alarmed by this and were taking precautions.

Q: The Korean War and the changeover in Czechoslovakia.

MAK: And Berlin, and they were threatening Germany and Europe in general, rattling swords. So anyway, our job was to negotiate a base agreement since the British had relinquished control to the new Libyan government.

My job was to clear away the underbrush in the negotiations, which meant that I would get together with Suleiman Jerbi of the Libyan Foreign Office. I would have a draft of the agreement that Washington wanted, and Suleiman would have a draft of the agreement that Libya wanted.

Q: Suleiman Jerbi was—

MAK: He was the head of the Foreign Office there. He wasn't Minister of Foreign Affairs, but rather a sort of Director General. He was later ambassador here, and he became a very good friend.

But Suleiman and I would sit together at the Foreign Office and would go through the draft agreements line by line and knock out the portions that we agreed on, those that needed no more negotiation. We then would be left with those that were causing problems. We then would discuss these sections at our embassy and he with his people, and then we would meet again and try to come to some agreed language. Well, that was pretty easy, because there were only two sticking points really in the whole agreement. One was status of forces.

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Q: Which means whether Libya had jurisdiction over American soldiers if they got in trouble or not.

MAK: Exactly. And the other was how much we'd give them in exchange for this agreement, and that had to be decided in Washington. State and Defense sent lawyers out to assist and advise. Eventually it was settled that we'd give Libya one million dollars a year, which seemed like an adequate sum at the time, in exchange for the right to use and expand Wheelus Air Force Base. But the thing had scarcely been signed when the Libyans thought better of it and negated the whole thing. However, I was soon transferred to London, so I didn't have anything more to do with it. Eventually the agreement was renegotiated, but that had nothing to do with me.

Q: Libya just did not have importance to us, except for the base?

MAK: I think basically two things. We, one, wanted to maintain our air base; and, two, we didn't want unfriendly foreign powers to have influence there.

Q: Were you concerned about Egypt at the time?

MAK: Egypt was not unfriendly to us at the time. Nasser was in power, but it was in a sort of honeymoon period in a way. There were problems, but they were not unmanageable problems. The appeal of Nasserism had not yet taken hold in Libya.

Q: Well, you were in London from 1954 to 1956. What was your job there?

MAK: I was political officer. We had a two-man desk in the political section, headed by Evan Wilson, which dealt with the British Foreign Office on Middle East and non-colonial African affairs. We had a myriad of problems at that time. It was an absolutely fascinating time, and I never worked harder in the Foreign Service, ever. It was an almost 24-hour-a-day job, and I thoroughly enjoyed it.

Library of Congress

Q: Who was our ambassador when you were?

MAK: Winthrop Aldrich.

Q: Did he take much interest in what you were doing?

MAK: Oh, he took an interest. Yes. The problems of the Middle East were such that our highest government officials were interested in and were involved in them. While the Ambassador didn't take a daily hand in the situations he knew everything that was going on and was invariably interested and helpful.

Q: What were the concerns that you were dealing with, and how did you go about dealing with these?

MAK: Well, first of all was the British evacuation of the bases in the Suez Canal zone. We were purely observers in that operation. Evan and I would visit our contacts at the Foreign Office daily and receive briefings on the status of the British negotiations for the evacuation of the British forces from their Suez Canal zone bases. We could then report this information by telegram to Washington. Of course, others in the Embassy—at higher levels—also reported parallel information from their high level sources, which called for considerable cooperation and coordination among us. It was a time-consuming job but very interesting.

Q: What was sort of our feeling as far as you got? I mean, we were glad they were getting out? We felt it was time and all that?

MAK: Well, yes. We felt there was no alternative. The British, in the first place, couldn't afford it. They couldn't afford financially to continue these bases. They had to withdraw; they knew it. They would have liked to have stayed if they could have afforded it, but they couldn't, and we weren't going to contribute to their staying. We didn't see any real reason for them to stay, except we wanted to be sure that the canal was kept open and

Library of Congress

available to us. I wouldn't say there was no friction between the British and the Egyptians, because there was a lot of friction. The British didn't get all they wanted, but agreement was reached.

Q: For us, we were more or less observers saying, "It's going to happen anyway." What other type of thing did you do?

MAK: Well, then we had the Persian oil agreement. Mossadegh had been ousted and our oil companies were negotiating with the Persians. The American and the British oil companies were together, and, there again, mine was a time-consuming task. It was just a midnight-oil job. The oil companies would get their negotiating instructions through the State Department channels at midnight, and since I lived a block from the embassy, I would be called to deliver the midnight (NIACT) messages to the American negotiators.

Q: Night action telegrams.

MAK: Right. And I would trot over to the embassy in the middle of the night and then trot the messages over to Davies Street, the office of one of the oil companies where the negotiations were being held. This happened night after night after night after night. I was a messenger boy. Just a messenger boy. And about the same time, the British were involved in the Buraimi oases dispute with Saudi Arabia.

Now, Buraimi is, as you know, an oasis in the Southern Arabian peninsula between Abu Dhabi and Oman and Saudi Arabia. And it was thought to be a likely site for oil. The Saudis had claims on it. Abu Dhabi and Oman had claims on it. While the British represented these groups and pressed their claims. The U.S., on the other hand, because of ARAMCO's interest, were supporting the Saudi claims. As a result there was an ongoing dispute and negotiations between ARAMCO and the British and the British and us. There again, we were merely observing and reporting at the embassy, the negotiations

Library of Congress

being primarily between the ARAMCO (representing the Saudi claims) and the British representing the Abu Dhabi and Omani sheikhs.

We had to keep on top of all this primarily to report to Washington. It was just a reportorial job, but it really brought out a very interesting thing to me, something I hadn't been aware of before or run up against it—how very sensitive the British were over their protectorates along the Persian or Arabian Gulf and in Southern Arabia.

As a matter of fact one fairly senior officer in the Foreign Office (Ian Samuel), showing his impatience with our attitude toward the Buraimi problem, said, “You know, Dayton, the greatest mistake we have made in this area was to allow you Americans to open a consulate in Kuwait.” I didn't pay much attention to this officers petulant remark, but it did demonstrate to me the depth of feeling in the British government about our intrusion in their bailiwick, the Persian Gulf and Southern Arabia. That for certain has worked its way out.

Q: When I was there in '58 to '60, it was still very much resented and particularly our ARAMCO's rather progressive attitude toward Saudi Arabia of trying to share; whereas, the British had very much the colonial attitude and kept feeling that ARAMCO was giving away the store to the detriment of the other oil companies there.

MAK: That's a point that I've always kept in mind and mentioned to many, many people—the really intelligent attitude of ARAMCO in dealing with the Saudis. They always dealt with them as partners and never as adversaries, and it made such a vast difference.

Q: Well, I mean, the answer, of course, is ARAMCO is still there, and many of these other ones are not. I mean, ARAMCO is Saudi, but still it is the same central concern, whereas the other ones are not.

MAK: They were very wise. I won't go into all the reasons I think they did it, but anyway, that's another story.

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In London, then, our duties were primarily reportorial. This meant visiting the Foreign Office daily discussing the various issues and exchanging information, as appropriate. This, of course had the blessing of the State Department. We would pass on information of mutual interest to them and they would do the same with us, often letting us read their official incoming and outgoing messages. So it worked very well. This made for a very long day. By the time you got back to the embassy and drafted the telegraphic reports, the hour could be pretty late. However, I thought it a lot of fun, and I enjoyed it thoroughly.

The most important event, or series of events, had to do with the Suez Canal takeover by Nasser, and that began just before I was suppose to be transferred back to Washington.

Q: In 1956.

MAK: In 1956, yes. We were being given a farewell dinner party by the Charg# d'affaires (Andrew Foster) in his home, and we had a number of my contacts from the Foreign Office and other friends there. We were just about to go into dinner—when the head of what they called the Foreign Office African Department was called to the telephone. When he came back he said, “I’m afraid I have to leave. We have just learned that President Nasser has nationalized the Suez Canal Company.” This, we knew, was about the same as a declaration of war.

Well, that ended my dinner party. I had to go back, the Charg# (our host) had to go back to our embassy to see what the tickers were saying, and to be in touch with the Department reporting developments in London and receiving instructions as to what we should do. At the same time the Andrea Doria had been rammed, and the ticker was filled with news of both of these events.

Q: Andrea Doria was the Italian ship that was rammed and sunk off of Long Island, so it was a big disaster.

Library of Congress

MAK: The British, of course, were outraged by Nasser's move. The French were likewise outraged, because they too had shares in the Suez Canal Company. This meant that, in effect, the Egyptians could do what they wanted with the Suez Canal now that they owned the company that owned and ran it. So this began long weeks of discussions, reporting and following events as the unfolded.

As you may remember the British and the French were rattling their swords and being very angry about the whole thing. Secretary Dulles wanted to quiet them down, and tried all sorts of measures to get both sides to negotiate. The French and British were adamant, though they agreed to discuss ways of bringing the opposing sides together to try to solve matters peacefully. The British, the French and we met several times in London, the respective delegations being headed by Selwyn Lloyd (British), Pinot (French) and Dulles (U.S.). I served as a minor member of our delegation, primarily as note-taker, drafter of position papers and general "handy-man." In the end the British and French weren't satisfied with any of this, so they, in collaboration with the Israelis, geared up their armed forces and set out to attack Egypt.

Q: Had you left at that time?

MAK: No.

Q: You were kept on?

MAK: My transfer was canceled.

Q: Yes. Your leave had been canceled.

MAK: My leave and my transfer had been canceled and I was told to stay on. Meanwhile, we'd packed all of our effects for transfer to Washington. We moved into a furnished apartment in the chancery, and then my wife and daughter went on to Washington to look for a house. I stayed on for some time. Until December, 1957, in fact.

Library of Congress

Q: You say you went to these meetings as an observer. I've talked to others, and the accounts are that there was an almost chemical reaction between Foreign Minister Selwyn Lloyd and John Foster Dulles. They really didn't like each other. Did you sense this, and was this a topic of anything sort of after meetings? Did you get this, or were you too far removed from it?

MAK: My recollection is that there wasn't anyone there who really liked or trusted Foster Dulles. They felt he was a meddler, a "goody-goody," who just didn't understand the gravity of Nasser's actions.

Q: You mean on the British side?

MAK: On the British side and the French. Of course, no one liked Pinot, the French Foreign Minister either.

Anyway. No one liked what Dulles was trying to do. They didn't think Dulles was doing anything but trying to stall and that he was not looking out for Western interests. He was being helpful to Nasser for his own reasons, or reasons which the British and French didn't share at all, and they didn't just dislike him, they despised him, at least, that was my impression.

Q: Were you getting this at your level of contacts?

MAK: Oh, yes.

Q: The people you were talking to called the working level, what sort of things were you getting? What sort of comments?

MAK: Well, in the first place, to go back just a bit, during the early period we didn't know what the British and French were planning to do. There were suspicions back in Washington that they were up to something, but they weren't telling us. I got wind of this

Library of Congress

through a top-secret message to the ambassador, which I of course had seen when I delivered it to him. It asked, in effect, "What are the British up to? They have been acting very strangely here in Washington." And they asked, "Is something going on?"

Armed with that knowledge, I paid particular attention to what people at the desk level, at the Foreign Office, were thinking and saying. They told me that they were puzzled as they were getting nothing from their own people about what the Israelis were doing in Sinai, or even what their own high level planners were thinking with regard to Nasser's nationalization of the canal. The desk level people told me they were in effect being frozen out from the top.

Q: These are the British desks?

MAK: British desk officers, yes. They told me they were being frozen out, and they didn't understand it; they didn't know what was going on. These were tense times. The newspapers were full of things about British army and naval movements as well as Israeli army movements.

Q: I'm just trying to get a feeling for the attitude at the working level, rather than saying, "I won't comment on this." Even the British side, they were sort of saying—

MAK: Perplexed.

Q: Perplexed, saying, "Hell, I don't know what's happening."

MAK: They didn't know. They literally did not know. Then when it was announced that the fleet was enroute to Egypt and when the bombs were dropped on the runways and elsewhere in Egypt, several of the desk officers submitted their resignations in disgust.

Q: These are the British desk officers?

Library of Congress

MAK: Yes, British desk officers. So there were ambivalent attitudes toward the whole operation, you see.

Q: At the embassy level, was the general feeling that there is something going to happen? What was your speculation and that of the people with whom you were working?

MAK: I'm trying to remember. I don't believe we thought the British would invade. I don't think we thought that they'd go that far, because we had issued very strong against it. Our ambassador had been instructed to go in and tell them, "Look, don't do anything." That's my recollection. So we thought they probably wouldn't, but they did and, of course, this infuriated Dulles. And it made a lot of people frightened in England.

Q: What happened to your relations with the desk people? You say some resigned. Were you sort of feeling there was almost a revolt within the Foreign Office?

MAK: There was a minor revolt. Yes, there was, at the lower level. Anyway, the U.S., Russia and others pressured the British and the French to withdraw, without defeating Nasser. The bitterness of the British and French towards us, and particularly Dulles, was intense. More conferences were called (by the U.S.) to find ways to clear the canal and ensure its safe and efficient operation to the benefit of all nations. Meanwhile, I was stuck in London with my family in Washington—I wanted to join my wife and daughter there. We wanted to get a house, and I'd been assigned as Libya desk officer. I said, "I really want to go home." So finally the embassy said, "Okay."

Q: When did you go back?

MAK: That was December.

Q: That was '56. One, you were getting part of this revolt, but were you also getting people who came from the more hard-line British that were giving you a difficult time in your

Library of Congress

contacts? I mean, "What are you Americans doing? You called us off just before we were ready to take over everything."

MAK: Well, there was definitely some of that, but I would say the general feeling was that it had been a great mistake.

Q: This is on the British side?

MAK: Yes. And linking up with the Israelis and the French wasn't terribly popular, anyway. It was the wrong war at the wrong time for the wrong reason, I guess.

Q: While this was going on, obviously the focus was there. I was in Frankfurt at the time, and we were saying, "What the hell is all this nonsense?" because we were concerned about the Hungarian revolt at the same time, because we felt this was the real game and this other thing is a sideshow which is diminishing our ability to deal. Did you have the October revolt in Hungary, was that playing any factor in the deliberations that you saw or not or concern?

MAK: I can't answer your question directly. I can say this. I do recall, now that you mention it, that everyone said, "My, God. What an awful time to have a crisis over Suez when something really important is going on." I don't know if you remember that the Russians threatened to rocket London during that period, and I mean people took this seriously. We were nervous. But that didn't happen. The world was not interested in Suez. That was a minor show. It should never have happened.

Q: All right. We'll stop this and pick it up when we can get together again.

MAK: Yes. Just the last thing. The Department didn't know I was coming home. They were sending a message saying that my transfer was canceled indefinitely.

Q: Okay, Dayton. We'll pick this up.

Library of Congress

Dayton, you had mentioned something that you thought you'd might mention about when you were in London.

MAK: Yes. It has to do with the various conferences that Secretary Dulles and the foreign ministers of U.K., Selwyn Lloyd and the French foreign minister, were having after Suez Canal debacle. Secretary Dulles was thinking up various schemes to get the canal users to have an association of some kind to operate the canal, and what I'm going to tell you is just an example of the tiny little things that go into making up a conference of this kind and silly little things that go into the making of decisions in that case.

Q: This is just the sort of thing we like to get. It gives a better feel for how things work.

MAK: Well, of course, one reason I'm telling you this is it was my idea, and so I'm patting myself on the back. [Laughter]

Q: Yes. A little toot of the horn never hurts.

MAK: Right. Well, I thought it was awfully funny. But anyway, the three powers were trying to find countries in the Far East whom they could get to join this Suez Canal Users Association and attend the conferences and try to work out some way of to put control of canal operations in the hands of Allied powers and the other users. They truly believed that Egypt was incapable of operating the canal. They didn't know how to go about choosing countries, say, east of Suez, who could legitimately be asked to join the Users Association; so I was given the task by our people of trying to figure out ways of doing this.

I took a couple of people back to our embassy library, where we looked up the trade figures for the countries east of Suez, including Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, Thailand, and others, and got the trade data, their export figures, and noted the destinations of all these shipments. Then we sort of figured, "Now, how much of this would have gone through the Suez Canal to reach the destination west of Suez and how much would have

Library of Congress

gone the other way or around the horn?" And try to get what percentage of foreign trade of the various countries would normally go through the Suez Canal.

Well, this wasn't all that difficult, really. We didn't have computers to do it, but we had adding machines and, you know, little calculators, and we finally came up with a number of countries who would probably qualify. The only one I really remember is India, and I suppose Pakistan is another one. Maybe Saudi Arabia, I don't recall. But I remember India in particular was invited to participate. I particularly because Krishna Menon turned out to be their representative through all these—

Q: Krishna Menon being the—

MAK: I think he was their foreign minister.

Q: At one point, he was minister of defense, foreign minister. He was anathema to the United States; he was far left.

MAK: He was. He was very anti-everything that we were interested in. But it appeared useful to have India's participation, primarily because of it's so-called "neutrality." Anyway, these figures and these decisions on who should be invited were then given to Secretary Dulles, the French foreign minister Pinot, and Britain's Selwyn Lloyd.

Well, Selwyn Lloyd got these figures (he happened to be chairman that day) and he said, "Well, I just want you to know that the entire British government could not come up with any firm indication of what countries should be invited to join the conference on the Canal Users Association, but the American Embassy was able to come up with it in about two hours." [Laughter] Well, of course, I was sitting in my seat and was flattered to death. Of course, no one pointed a finger and said, "He did it," but anyway, it was rather amusing how you sometimes arrive at decisions.

Q: Well, now, you left there in—

Library of Congress

MAK: December 1956.

Q: And you went to Washington.

MAK: Went to Washington where I was scheduled to become the Libya desk officer, which I became.

Q: How long did you have that job?

MAK: I had that about two years. It was really a pretty uneventful tour. I didn't really feel that it was a very good use of my time or what few talents I had, and so I sort of angled to get out of it. What I succeeded in doing was made staff assistant to the assistant secretary for the Near East Bureau. It had been Near East and African Affairs. They divided that, made it a separate bureau out of African affairs—the African part—and another bureau out of the Near Eastern-South Asian part, and I was asked to be staff assistant to the Assistant Secretary of the Near East-South Asia part.

Q: William Rountree?

MAK: Who at that point was William Rountree, right.

Q: First, before we move to that, you were on the Libyan desk from '57 to—

MAK: '59. Sometime in '59, as I recall.

Q: '59. When you say that there really wasn't much to do, by that time, I mean, Qadhafi had not come on the scene.

MAK: Right.

Q: The Wheelus Air Base agreement had been more or less taken care of.

Library of Congress

MAK: More or less.

Q: Or was this just a continuing series of arguments?

MAK: Well, there were two matters of concern that I dealt with primarily. One was the formulation of a new petroleum law, because American companies were going out to Libya searching for oil, which everyone had been assured there wasn't any at all before, but they were obviously proven dead wrong. So the various oil companies, in conjunction with the U.S. Government, were formulating a draft of a petroleum law for the state of Libya.

I can't say that I really had any hand in it, because I didn't. The only thing that I really considered a sort of constructive contribution was in trying to get aid approved from the U.S. Government to the country of Libya. The base agreement thing had gone awry, and we were still negotiating with the Libyans on how much they were to get for the base rights and so forth, although there was supposed to be no quid pro quo. It was just our "generosity" and their "self-interest" that were involved.

Someone in the government had dreamed up a new sort of document you had to prepare, getting the agreement of Defense, AID, White House, Bureau of the Budget, all sorts of people, to stipulate and prove that the granting of money to Libya by the U.S. Government was in the U.S. Government's vital interest. Well, that was my job, to prepare such a document and get it approved by the various departments and agencies. I can't even think of what they called it—

I think it was called a "216 determination." As none had ever been drawn up, or something like that. I, in effect, had to invent one, and I did. I invented one on paper and got everyone to sign it—Defense, State, AID, everyone but the head of the Bureau of the Budget. He dug in his heels and said, "No, no, no."

I then had to take it up to Robert Murphy, who was then Under Secretary of State—I think that's what he was called then, for political affairs—and try to argue this case with him to

Library of Congress

get his willingness to urge the big guns—the State Department—to go to the President to have him approve the determination. We failed. Robert Murphy was not convinced and the thing didn't go through, and I don't remember how Libya ever got its money.

Q: Another question, though, on this. Libya was working on oil affairs and you were the desk officer. How did it work? We're talking about in the late '50s in the Department of State when oil came in. Did the desk officer, or the country desk officer, was this the action officer? Or what about the economics side? Was there sort of a petroleum overlord within the Department who would sort of march in and take control when you're talking oil at that point, or was it pretty much left to the geographic desk?

MAK: My recollection is that we had almost nothing to do with it. It was done entirely by either oil experts or people above or the economic bureau or somewhere else. As I mentioned, I really didn't have an awful lot to do; I was bored.

Q: You were staff assistant for William Rountree from '59 to '61, I think.

MAK: Well, no, I had several different people. Lewis Jones came in as assistant secretary sort of midway during my term.

Q: You were there in the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs—

MAK: Until the summer of '61.

Q: What were the main issues that you were seeing that we were dealing with at that point?

MAK: Oh, golly. It was really across the board; lots of issues. There was always the Arab-Israel problem. There was Nasser. The Cyprus problem was an ongoing affair. Archbishop Makarios causing trouble for a lot of people, and the Turks and the Greeks not getting

Library of Congress

along about it, nor the British. In '58 we had, of course, the Lebanon blowup and the aftermath of that.

In South Asia there were constant problems. India, Kashmir, probably with Pakistan. There was a host of problems which I did not deal with in a substantive way myself. I was sort of a helper to the assistant secretary, which in a lot of cases meant just a hatchet man.

Q: What do you mean by being a "hatchet man"?

MAK: Well, I had to convey instructions to the various chiefs of section to prepare information memos to the secretary, prepare position papers and instructions to the posts abroad as needed. It was my job to see that all this was done speedily and correctly. A staff assistant in those days was an arm of the staff secretariat of the Secretary of State. We had to make sure that everything that was prepared for the Secretary's signature for any of the high ranking officers of the department was done in a proper way. Dulles was a very, very particular man and a very meticulous person. You had to have things done his way, and his secretariat staff were very demanding, often unattractively so.

They are very, very strict; and they were kept under very tight rein, and so were we.

Q: How about when Herter became the Secretary? Did that continue that way?

MAK: He was much easier, much, much lighter. But his secretariat continued to operate pretty much the way it had under Dulles, although Dulles had some pretty unpleasant people directly under him.

Q: Who were some of these people?

MAK: Having said that, I'd rather not say.

Q: Well, I'll tell you the reason I asked.

Library of Congress

MAK: Well, I can. Rod O'Connor. He's no longer living. Rod was not a very nice person to deal with.

Q: Because I'm trying to get people an idea of how a bureaucracy works, and when you have somebody who is not a nice person to deal with, what are you talking about from your observation?

MAK: He was overprotective of the Secretary. He was not interested at all in substance; he was interested only in form and style, which was sometimes maddening. He was very crude in his dealings with anyone at the bureau level, including the assistant secretary.

Q: What was his background?

MAK: He was a lawyer, worked, I think, in Dulles' law firm in New York. That's my recollection.

Q: Well, now, another thing. In the Department at that time dealing in the Near Eastern affairs, this is about the period when the Israeli or Jewish lobby—whatever you want to call it—was really finding and getting its power. Were you aware of this, and were you having manifestations of this basically domestic political force? Did you become aware of how it operated?

MAK: Oh, yes. That was one of the things you just accepted as being a fact of life. The Jews in this country had a tremendous lobby, a very, very efficient lobby, and a very reasonable lobby in what they were saying. They were very good at expressing their point of view. They would come in regularly to discuss matters with the assistant secretary of state, and certainly with the Secretary, as well. I was only privy to their talks with the assistant secretary and with the deputy assistant secretaries.

They had constant contact with the State Department at all levels. They were invariably polite, but they were very, very forceful. They were not threatening, but they made it

Library of Congress

absolutely clear what their interests were and how they thought decisions should be made and what decisions should be made.

Q: How about dealing with Congress at the time? Did Congress reflect the Israeli lobby pretty much?

MAK: Yes. Well, as everyone knows, in those days at least, the Arabs had very little constituency in the United States. The Jews had a large constituency. Not just the Jews, but the vast majority of the American people were sympathetic to Israel's situation in the Middle East. Most Americans didn't think much about the problem. They perhaps would read the headlines and their emotions were always—or generally, at least—on the side of the Jews.

The issues were not terribly important to them, and it was sort of a case of the Americans looking at the map where they had to have seen a vast Arab land with a couple hundred million people and this tiny, little Israel beleaguered by the Arabs, and their interest didn't go much beyond that. So there really wasn't much of a constituency for the Arabs.

Q: Was anybody talking for the Arabs with the Department?

MAK: Well, yes. I wouldn't say that the Arab diplomatic corps was very effective. They later learned to become so, but they didn't have many financial resources, and they had not constituency at all in Congress and very little in the country. So while they regularly visited the Department of State, they didn't have regular access to the top levels as the Jews did.

They rarely met with the Secretary, for instance. They had regular access to the assistant secretaries, but that was generally on minor bilateral problems. And if they wanted to meet with anyone in the Department of State at a higher level on matters concerning Israel, they generally came in as a group, and that was rather not often.

Library of Congress

Q: Speaking of lobbies, at this period of time there really wasn't anything that would approach being called a Greek lobby. Could you say that?

MAK: Oh, no. There certainly was. The Greeks had a very, very good organization, AHEPA.

Q: That's the American Hellenic Educational Protective Association, or something like that.

MAK: Something like that. I honestly never knew what it stood for. But AHEPA was very active. They were very strong. AHEPA was one of the strongest lobbyist groups that I knew of. The Turks had none.

Q: Well, there aren't that many Turks in the United States, and yet the Greek population—I mean, those that are derived from Greek ancestry—is actually rather large in the United States, also well placed as far as having done well in business and in the professions.

MAK: Yes. In addition to that, there was a general feeling of kinship with the Christian Greeks, who had, after all, been occupied by the Nazis and knocked around by the Italians and the Nazis during World War II, and there is a sort of residual sympathy for them. Also, we always looked to Greece as one of the founts of our culture, so there was, as I say, a basic sympathy toward the Greeks. The Turks were pretty much left out of that equation.

Q: From the vantage point of where you were, how did the people in Near Eastern affairs view Nasser and his manifestations at the time?

MAK: There was a great deal of ambivalence. You're speaking of the Near East-South Asia—

Q: Bureau. I'm talking about from the assistant secretary, but also the people you were around there.

Library of Congress

MAK: Yes. The desk levels. That was very interesting. There was really quite a dichotomy. There was a very vociferous group, primarily of Arabists, who thought Nasser was the greatest thing on earth. He was really going to do something for the Arabs' pride and for the Arabs' nation and for Egypt, which was just bursting out of the sort of colonial scheme of things. This group felt that he, having thrown out King Farouk, who everyone agreed was corrupt, was going to do something pretty good for Egypt, things that had to be done, and would be in the U.S. best interest in the long run.

Now, that view was shared by a lot of people, but it was also directly opposite to what a lot of other people, well-meaning people, thought. They looked upon Nasser as a direct challenge to Western interests in the area, and they felt that what was happening was that Egypt was turning into a military dictatorship, which we tend automatically to oppose.

So there you have it. It was really quite a division. I would say that at the upper levels, at the assistant secretary level, there was a far more balanced view. It was, "Well, let's wait and see what he does." Several of our strong allies, or rather "working partners," such as Iraq and Saudi Arabia were violently opposed to Nasser. Iraq looked at Nasser and Egypt as a direct challenge to the things that Iraq was trying to do for itself.

Q: You're talking about Iraq before or after—was it July 14, 19—was it '58?

MAK: Well, it sort of straddled that period.

Q: Because it was on both sides of it?

MAK: Yes, it straddled that period. We weren't happy, of course, what happened during and after the Iraqi revolution in which King Faisal and others were killed.

Q: We're talking about when Qasim took over a military coup which killed the king in—what was it—July 14, 1958.

Library of Congress

MAK: Yes.

Q: But did we see this as more of a danger, what was happening in Iraq, than we did in what was happening in Egypt? How did we view that Arab area?

MAK: Well, my recollection is—we're talking about quite a while ago—my recollection is that we considered Nasser and Egypt far more important than Iraq. After all, Iraq's influence in the Arab world was very small. Egypt's, on the other hand, was tremendous.

Q: You know, at the same period you're talking about, I remember seeing in the Persian Gulf, where I was stationed, pictures of Nasser everywhere, even his picture on Thermos jugs and all this. I mean, in the marketplace, everywhere.

MAK: Oh, yes. Absolutely true. It's hard to overstate the influence of Nasser and of Egypt at that period in the entire area, including Iraq. So that's something the Iraqi leadership had to fight.

Q: Were you sitting in, or were we figuring out how we were going to counter Nasserism? Or are we just going to sort of see how it develops and keep what amounts to a watching brief on it?

MAK: I think at that time we were going to make every effort that we could to get along with Nasser and to make him our friend. That was my recollection. We wanted to help them. We wanted to try to help him and steer him along paths that were in our interests.

Q: Well, this was after the Aswan Dam thing, wasn't it?

MAK: No.

Q: Dulles was dead. In '59 he was out if it, I guess, at least toward the end of your time.

Library of Congress

MAK: Yes, he was. I'm trying to sort these people out. Well, after the Aswan Dam, as you know, the Russians came in with the arms proposals, and we were being much shunted aside. In a way, as I recall, we were not unhappy to be shunted aside at the time. I guess that's about all I can say. I'm going to begin to wander.

Q: Why don't we then move onto your next assignment? You were going to Kuwait. You were there from 1961 to '63, and it was sort of a—I might add that I've attached to this transcript a transcript that was done by you for the historian—or whatever you want to say—of our embassy in Kuwait, didn't you?

MAK: Yes. Let's see.

Q: Anyway, you did this tape to give for the historical record and it covers quite a bit about what you did in Kuwait, so I'm not going to go into that very much. But there are a couple of questions in there that I would like to ask. First, how did you get this assignment to Kuwait, and what was the situation at the time? We're talking about 1961.

MAK: Well, I remember it fairly well. My friend, Hermann Eilts, was head of the Arabian Peninsula Affairs desk, and Hermann was an old friend of mine and I think he had a certain respect for me. He asked me if I'd be interested in going there, and I told him that I really wasn't very much. The Gulf just didn't appeal to me, having had one tour in Dhahran.

But he was convincing. He said, "You know, the British are going to relinquish control over Kuwait in mid-1961, shortly after you arrive there, so we'll be establishing an embassy. You'll be charg# d'affaires of that. And you know Arabic and you know a certain amount about the area, having been involved in it for many years, and we think that perhaps that you might like it and we'd like to have you go."

Library of Congress

I was flattered, so I thought, "Sure, why not go and be Charg# d'affaires." He said they were not planning on sending an ambassador there, so I would be in charge of the embassy. So we went. That's in answer to your question.

Q: Well, now, several questions. One, how did you deal with the Kuwaiti government, and how did you evaluate the Kuwaiti government?

MAK: First of all, practically every minister in the government was a member of the Sabah family.

Q: Would you spell that?

MAK: S-A-B-A-H. Sabah. The Emir Abdullah was a very friendly man who was really quite approachable, but he almost never was interested in discussing anything substantive. Our calls on the emir were of almost entirely ceremonial. You would go in and chat about this and that and this and that, never about anything important. He would invite you and your wives to dinners at the palace often, and he would give his time to all of you. Then he'd invite the ladies in a group without the men and chat with them for a while. Then you'd all go home very early. You'd get home about 6:00, 7:00 in the evening, and then have what some of the westernized Arabs would call the "apr#s souper," which is in this case meant drinks after dinner.

Some of the Ministers were impressive. The foreign minister at the time was Sheik Sabah al Ahmad, while deputy Emir the "Crown Prince" was Sheik Sabah al-Salem al-Sabah, brother of the emir. He was very approachable, and I would go and visit him fairly often, at least once a month. He had an office in the Foreign Office at that time and he also had an office elsewhere, but I'd visit him and discuss general problems with him either at the Foreign Office or at his home. We had very few immediate problems to discuss, though there would be general area problems on which I sought his views.

Library of Congress

One of the big problems was what to do about Nasser and what to do about the Iraqi situation. Shortly after the Kuwaiti independence which was shortly after I had arrived, Qasim had claimed Kuwait as part of Iraq, and there was a great to-do about it. He threatened to invade, but the British forces came in quickly in accordance with their agreement. In two months the British left, and there was a problem of who was going to protect Kuwait then. A mixed Arab force was brought in and life went on. All of that was of course subject to discussion. I would discuss with the foreign minister, the deputy emir and the Defense Minister general ideas of Kuwait and its requirements for outside protection.

Another subject was how Kuwait would spend its oil revenue. They had devised an elaborate and very intelligent aid program, mainly for the benefit of other needy Arab nations. They had devised a development program, assisted by a board of reputable foreigners, including our Eugene Black, who would help them in planning what to do with their money. I discussed this occasionally in very general terms with the deputy emir.

The Foreign Office was a place where I would visit about every week to discuss anything and everything. I found them very approachable, all of them. The foreign minister, Sheik Sabah al Ahmad al Sabah is still the foreign minister. A very nice man, very approachable, and all of his staff underneath were people I could pop in on like I did in London. They were that kind of people. They had a few Palestinians working with them as assistants mainly to the foreign minister and with the deputy emir who were also very approachable and very receptive to my just walking in. So it was a very friendly arrangement.

Q: How about competence?

MAK: They didn't have an awful lot of things to be competent about. They were intelligent, they were educated. You know, it's really very hard to judge. I would say they had a high degree of competence, particularly at the functional level. I think many of them were more intelligent than their sheikly bosses.

Library of Congress

Q: Well, you know, again I'm speaking of some distance removed; I visited Kuwait once. But just watching the news and all that, it seems that here is a small desert nation, really desert nation. I mean, what is it? You put up a water tower and that's the tallest building around, at least in those days. No hills or anything else, infertile area. All of a sudden a lot of money comes in, and yet the ruling people didn't seem to become dissipated with this. There may have been dissipation, but I mean it just didn't seem to turn the place into an earthly paradise or something for a bunch of oil sheiks. Did you have that feeling that these were people who both were intelligent, but also had civic duty, or something like that?

MAK: In general, I would say that's true. They're very religious in the first place. They observe the Koran. Now, that doesn't mean that some of them didn't drink or didn't do things they shouldn't do according to the Koran, but basically they were religious people.

Second, there's another thing about it. Kuwait had a vast amount of money at its disposal, and there were few Kuwaitis. As a matter of fact, I don't think that when I was there were more than 50 or 60,000 Kuwaitis, actually. The number was always arguable. Of these there were the "Kuwaiti Kuwaitis." Then there were "Saudi Kuwaitis" and there were "Lebanese Kuwaitis" and "Palestinian Kuwaitis" and "Iraqi Kuwaitis;" but these were all second-class citizens. But of "Kuwaiti Kuwaitis," those born in Kuwait of Kuwaiti parents, there are really not very many, and they all had family property in Kuwait. Not much maybe, because Kuwait's not very big, but they had some.

The government would buy land from them at enormous prices, and they all became millionaires. I mean, just like that they became millionaires. Those who didn't have any property were given things that would bring them money. In other words, they were beneficiaries of this immense wealth. Any foreigner who wanted to establish a business in Kuwait had to have a Kuwaiti partner, and this was worth lots and lots of money to any Kuwaiti who would lend his name to a business; and they all did it. So they all became

Library of Congress

wealthy, by one means or another. It didn't just trickle down, it rushed down, to the Kuwaitis.

That's one way the Kuwaitis handled this vast wealth. The other way was to have a comprehensive health scheme under which any Kuwaiti, or any non-Kuwaiti living in Kuwait, could have health care free throughout his entire life. Education was also free for all Kuwaitis. Now, it wasn't necessarily for non-Kuwaitis and it wasn't. There was practically free housing for any Kuwaiti—any Kuwaiti. I'm a little vague about what happens now, but in those days it was really free. Of course, this left hundreds of thousands of non-Kuwaitis without all these benefits. But they had some (including health) benefits, better than they would have in their home countries.

So that's how they spent a lot of their wealth. They also spent it on nice homes in Beirut, or in Cairo. They established a very handsome development assistant fund for the needy Arab states such as Jordan and Sudan; I believe Somalia, both Somalias, as far as I know; Egypt, as far as it needed it; and the various countries in North Africa.

Q: The Kuwaiti government has seemed to have held together and there seems to be a certain amount of steel in it. I'm thinking for the last, almost ten years there's been some terrorists who did some bombing and killing there, and there has been intense pressure from Lebanon on the part of other terrorist organizations to get them out, and yet the Kuwaitis have held firm on keeping these people. This, of course, after the time you were there, but there does seem to be a cohesiveness, rather than just, "Well, let's not cause trouble." I mean, they seem to be able to take a stand and hold to it.

MAK: I think the Kuwaitis have shown far more courage than I would have given them credit for. It's hard for me to know just why they have taken the risks that they have taken. I'll offer some guesses. Their leaders are Sabah, members of the Sabah family, who have been used to governing that country for quite a while. Most of them seem to have—or at least the ones in power—seem to have a real sense of responsibility toward their country.

Library of Congress

Their present deputy emir—I guess they call him deputy emir; is an extremely capable and bright, well-meaning and tough individual. He's a black. He's the only really black member of the family. He used to be minister of defense when I was there. As far as he's pro-anything outside, he's pro-Western and pro-American.

I remember when I was there, the government had agreed to let the Russians establish an embassy. This was shortly before I left. And I went to him and I said, "Excellency, I don't understand why you're letting these people come in. You know they'll be all over the place trying to rid of people like you and get rid of people like us. How are you going to keep track of them?"

He looked at me and smiled and says, "Mr. Mak, we expect you to do that." [Laughter] Anyway, he's a charming individual. The present emir—

Q: The emir, by the way, is the head of government.

MAK: Yes. The emir is the head of government. The present emir was minister of finance when I was there. He knows the financial situation of Kuwait and the rest of the world backward and forward. He watches every penny. He knows exactly what he's doing. He's been trained in it, and he's very, very smart. He's not going to be taken in by anyone. He's dealt with David Rockefeller and his ilk for years now. He can't be buffaloed, and apparently somewhere along the line, the Sabah family has come to the conclusion that if they give into blackmail or threats, that's the end of the Sabahs and the end of Kuwait. That's the only answer I can come up with.

Q: Dayton, going back now to the time you were there, the early '60s. I'm talking about the embassy or the mission or whatever we called it. What did we call it?

MAK: Embassy.

Library of Congress

Q: How did we view the Palestinians there? Because I know going back a little earlier when I was in Saudi Arabia, there was always a concern because Saudi Arabia had so many Palestinians doing things, including flying their fighter planes and running their army. In fact, they even had a separate army called the White Army, which was just to make sure that the regular Saudi Army, which was almost run by the Palestinians, didn't get out of hand. So there was concern that the Palestinians had another master other than where they were serving, at least I'm talking about our reflections in Saudi Arabia. How did you view the Palestinians who staffed so many of the professional positions there? As a threat?

MAK: As you know, there were thousands and thousands of Palestinians living in Kuwait, and many of them had very responsible positions. They were advisors to the emir, advisors to the Foreign Office, advisors to this and that ministry, and they were very capable. Some of them were given Kuwaiti citizenship. These people were educated. Almost all of them spoke English fluently. I mean, they were certainly bilingual. They were friendly to Americans, at least to the embassy, as far as I know.

There was a vast number, along with the Egyptians, of course, as lower-level people, and a vast number in their educational system. The Kuwaitis' educational system was pretty much run at all levels by Palestinians and Egyptians. The Palestinians were always looked upon by the Kuwaitis as second- and third-class residents. Those who were citizens were second-class citizens. Those who were merely residents and workers were looked down upon.

The Kuwaitis let them know their place always. All levels of Kuwaitis, from Bedouin on up, let the Palestinians know that they were guests. Whereas, the Palestinians were given free medical treatment, they were not given free housing, and they were kept on a pretty short leash. Now, that's sort of like a pride of lions being led around by one man. I guess they knew the Palestinians had nowhere to go, and they handled it very well.

Library of Congress

Q: They also made sure the Palestinians weren't discontented. In other words, they were getting enough out of this so that they did not represent a discontented under-class.

MAK: Yes. That's exactly it. They were well paid by Arab-world standards. They were not well paid by Kuwaiti standards, but they were able to send money home. If they still had people living in what is now Israel or in Jordan, they could send money home. That was a very, very important source of income to their families. Many of them were there without their families, but most of them, a lot of them, a vast majority, had families.

Q: So you didn't see them as a fifth column of threat, particularly at that point?

MAK: No. No, I didn't. I think that the Kuwaitis considered the Egyptians far more serious a threat than they did—that was under Nasser—than they did the Palestinians.

Q: Were they making special efforts, and were you keeping a special eye, on the Egyptians or being concerned about the Egyptians and what they might be trying to do?

MAK: Well, yes. We did have to do that, because they were the element that was considered to be the most disruptive in Kuwait while we were there. It was the Kuwaitis who were keeping the eye on them. We were sort of following along, too. But if there was ever something in the area that displeased Nasser, something that we had done or the British had done or one of the Western countries had done, the signal apparently would go out to his people in Kuwait and they would start roaring down the path to the American Embassy or the British Embassy. The Kuwaiti police would then have to go in and stop them.

The Kuwaitis did not trust the Egyptians at all, or Nasser or his intentions. And after the “border invasion” of Kuwait by the Iraqis, as I mentioned earlier, the Kuwaitis wanted to set up some sort of an Arab force to replace the British to help protect Kuwait. The Kuwaitis were really more suspicious of two people, the Saudis and the Egyptians. They were not sure that the Saudis did not want to come in and gobble them up with their oil, which is strange because they're practically brothers. But there was definitely that feeling that Saudi

Library of Congress

intentions were not entirely honorable. And they knew darn well that Egypt's were not honorable. They did not want the Egyptians to send forces to help protect Kuwait.

Q: Didn't want to invite the wolf into the sheep pen.

MAK: Yes. That's a good simile. That's true. So that whole thing sort of blew over, and I left and I sort of lost track of what happened.

Q: Well, one last question on this and I'll refer anybody to your enclosed other transcript. But how about dealing with the British? Having pulled out, were they the paramount group there? Did you have the feeling you were taking over, and were they being sort of dog-in-the-mangerish about the now increased importance of the United States in the Gulf, as far as you saw it?

MAK: Well, the British had a very good, very strong embassy in Kuwait when I was there and a very good, likable, friendly ambassador. And they really tried very hard not to be dog-in-the-mangerish, but it's very difficult to give up a place like Kuwait where they had sort of been the raj. They had their chosen people in the government, and they had a great deal of goodwill in Kuwait and the entire area, but they really did like to make it quite clear that they were the bosses there and not we.

I don't want to say that they were obnoxious about it, because we got along very well with them, socially and in every way, and in a way I think they knew that they had a problem of getting out of their obligations gracefully. You know, leaving the area gracefully. They knew that there was no choice but for us to take over. We had already started in the Gulf. And that was a bitter pill, but they knew that it was one they had to swallow because the orders came from London that, they had to cut down on their expenditures, which would certainly reduce their privileges in the area. So it was a period of transition for the British, definite transition, that was hard for them to take, and they did it gracefully.

Library of Congress

Q: Well, as you were running our embassy there, did you work with the American officers to sort of explain and make sure that we weren't too rambunctious or something and to be aware of the British feelings on this thing?

MAK: You speak about the American officers, we only had a handful.

Q: Okay. Well, I mean the three of you.

MAK: There were four of us, I think.

Q: Was this a subject of some conversation and concern?

MAK: No. It was not a matter of concern. We were all socially friendly with the British Embassy. They had a much larger embassy, of course, than we did, and they had various people seconded to various agencies or other ministers and so forth, but not as many as you'd think, as a matter of fact. But, no, there was not the slightest bit of problem on that score.

Q: Well, Dayton, I'd like to move on then. You left there in '63, and you went to the Naval War College where you spent a year, and we won't go into that, because we'll move to your last overseas assignment. That was as deputy chief of mission in Beirut from 1964 to '69. How did that assignment come about?

MAK: Golly. I guess it came about having—well, being available and having two slots open in Beirut. I guess they just figured that here's a body and there's a vacancy. Both the economic slot and the political slot were going to be open. Dick Parker was going to be transferred somewhere—I've forgotten where—and the economic slot was open. So I guess that's how.

Q: But you went as deputy chief of mission?

Library of Congress

MAK: No. I went out as economic officer. When I arrived, Ambassador Meyer—

Q: This is Armin Meyer.

MAK: Ambassador Armin Meyer said, “Look, you can have your choice. You can be head of the political section or you can be head of the economic section.” I felt, well, I’ve been doing economic work mainly in Kuwait—or it was a mixture in Kuwait. I thought, well, why not flip a coin. And it came up political.

Q: Economic, you mean?

MAK: Political. No, I decided to take the political section. So that’s what I was, chief of the Embassy’s political section.

Q: I might mention I assume at this point—we’re talking about 1964—that Beirut was considered a marvelous assignment.

MAK: Oh, it was. Yes. It was never quite what they would call the Paris of the Middle East. It might have been Paris of the Middle East, but it wasn’t much like Paris. But it was delightful, yes. It was a wonderful place.

Q: We’re speaking now of 1989, and it’s considered sort of hell on earth as far as a war-torn place. We have a minuscule representation.

MAK: It was a delightful place then. A hell-hole now.

Q: The ambassador was Armin Meyer for part of the time you were there.

MAK: Yes, he was there. Well, anyone who wants to read about what really went on in Lebanon my first couple of years should read his tapes.

Q: In fact, you just interviewed him as part of our collection.

Library of Congress

You became deputy chief. When did that happen?

MAK: After the '67 War.

Q: Armin Meyer has been an ambassador in a number of places, including Japan. What was his operating style?

MAK: Armin had been initially a newspaper correspondent, as I remember.

That was, I think, briefly. He was mainly in the USIS, and then his tremendous capabilities were recognized and he was brought in the Department as DCM in Afghanistan where he really ran the embassy, and then later on he served in the Department as deputy assistant secretary. He was a man of obvious terrific capabilities. He worked primarily in the Middle East—probably entirely in the Middle East up until then—and that's why he was chosen as ambassador.

Q: How did he use the embassy? How did he use you?

MAK: I got waylaid, didn't I? He had served in Beirut before as political officer and charg# d'affaires. He knew everybody; he really did. He knew Lebanon like very few Lebanese know it. He really was keen on this. So, as a result, he pretty much ran his own embassy. He knew what should be reported. He knew what was going on. He knew whom to see. He knew what should be done. Each morning he would immediately begin typing out reports of events to be reported, which, of course, left me with not much to do. So when something would happen that I knew about and I presumed that Armin knew about it too I would rush into the embassy before he got to his typewriter and had it all typed out, and on his desk by the time he got to his typewriter. I really would frantically try to get things into him before he got to them. He didn't read French, which I did, so I could also read the newspaper and get a little bit up on him from that point of view. But Armin could have run

Library of Congress

that embassy without any help. [Laughter] A stenographer was all he needed. His antenna was formidable, so accurate. He knew everything going on.

Q: What were our concerns there at that time?

MAK: Well, I guess our main concern at the time was the presidential elections that were coming up in Lebanon. Now, this is a silly thing to be concerned about, but it was. The various forces of Lebanon were trying to battle out who was going to be president. It tended to be a contest between the pro-Nasserites and anti-Nasserites, almost the pro-West and the anti-West. It was sort of like that. But it really wasn't of all that much concern to us, but the parties concerned made it so.

Q: One found oneself sucked into these politics, which, of course, at that time had not turned septic as they have now.

MAK: Well, it was a peculiar situation, and actually it was pretty unimportant from the standpoint of our viewpoint in the world. Our interests really were never in jeopardy whichever side won, so it was really a matter of just watching.

Q: Was there ever a feeling, looking at this thing objectively, that really Lebanon should have been a part of Syria? I mean, it made more sense than this really post-World War I creation, or not?

MAK: That's really a tough one. The Lebanese really didn't want to part of Syria. Now, it's certain that some Lebanese would not be unhappy to be a part of Syria, but Syria had gone through revolution after revolution, government after government after government, and to attach itself to a jumping jack like that didn't really make much sense. The Lebanese are, above all, merchants. I mean, that's not just the Christians or the top Moslems, they're all basically merchants. They've done it for centuries. They know how to get along, and they really don't much want anyone telling them what to do.

Library of Congress

Q: When one talks about the Levant, that's the Levant.

MAK: Yes, that's basically it. They're the Levantines.

There was another thing that interested us—two things, really—I think of a major interest to us. One was the Arab-Israel matter. The Israelis were trying to get more water out of the rivers that flowed through Lebanon and Jordan than the riparian states thought they were entitled to. Lebanon, and of course Jordan, would prefer that they didn't get a drop of their water that originated in the Arab land.

Various schemes were devised by the Israelis to divert water for their own use, and the Arabs, the Lebanese, concocted their schemes to keep them from doing it, like building diversionary canals and the whole thing. We had to keep on top of that.

This also was the beginning of the Palestinian forces movement into South Lebanon to use the south as a launching point of attacks against Israel. This was a matter of constant concern to the Lebanese, who then sought our help in placating the Israelis. Trying to keep the Israelis and the Lebanese from fighting one another, over actions of the Palestinians was a problem.

Q: What were you doing? I mean, you at the embassy and you personally.

There was still a considerable settling of Palestinians in southern Lebanon at that time?

MAK: Fatah was organized and became important during that time, and PFLOP. All those splinter groups of Fatah, and Arafat himself, became known, and they started setting up camp in the south. I thought I invented the word "Fatahland," but I gather other people have invented it, too, so we all invented it.

Q: What was the embassy doing and what were you doing as far as the problem of the Palestinians moving in and setting up these things?

Library of Congress

MAK: The problems, as I remember, were often about border problems with the Israelis. Generally it concerned suspicions that the Palestinians were up to something on the border. The Lebanese were scared to death that the Israelis would invade Lebanon if the Palestinians launched attacks across the border. After a series of such Palestinian "forays," I can remember the Foreign Ministers asking me if we knew about Israeli intentions to attack them. Just like that. I think they wanted us to pass on to the Israelis word that they did not want any trouble. Anything that happened, they were not a party of. I believe I was Charg# at the time and was asked to call on the Foreign Minister in that capacity.

Q: Because there was no Lebanese representation in Israel, of course.

MAK: That's right.

Q: Well, did you pass this word on to our embassy?

MAK: I passed it to Washington.

Q: How were relations between our embassy in Lebanon and our embassy Tel Aviv? Were there mutual consultations?

MAK: No, we didn't have any. Every once in a while they would send an officer over to discuss matters, but we had no direct liaison.

Q: What happened during the '67 War? This was the very successful war of the Israelis in which they basically took over the whole Sinai and the Golan Heights and all of the West Bank, too, wasn't it?

MAK: Yes.

Q: And Jerusalem.

Library of Congress

MAK: Well, there was a great deal of tension before the war erupted. Nasser was making all sorts of threats against Israel. I'm not saying they weren't justified, I'm just saying that he was making all these threats about invading Israel and knocking out Israel for this reason and that reason. Jordan was sort of in between. They were terribly nervous about Israeli intentions, and suddenly the thing exploded, with the Israelis making a preemptive attack on Egypt, which was totally successful. However, as I remember, the King of Jordan saw some planes, thought they were ours, and protested to the American Embassy and to the world that Americans had joined in the battle against the Arab world.

At the same time, King Hussein decided that Nasser was winning so Jordanian troops attacked Israel. Foolishly, of course, but they attacked Israel. The Lebanese press then absolutely blew this all out of proportion, and the United States was suddenly one of the villains largely because of King Hussein's mistake about the Israeli planes.

Q: Then how did this impact on you?

MAK: Well, as a result, we started evacuating people from Egypt and from Israel and, I think, from Jordan; and our dependents and non-essential U.S. Government personnel were evacuated from Beirut.

Q: These are basically dependents and—

MAK: Dependents and nonessential personnel, yes, and our ambassador was asked to leave. The Lebanese were completely ambivalent in this thing. The Moslems were almost entirely anti-American. They started storming the embassy, throwing Molotov cocktails and stones at the chancery building. The crowds swooped down the Cornice to the embassy.

Q: The Cornice being the main road along the coast.

Library of Congress

MAK: Along the coast, leading to the embassy and past where we lived and past the American University of Beirut, beating up our cars parked along there, and then finally being stopped by tanks of the Lebanese Army.

There was a blackout in Lebanon, and our dependents were evacuated at night through the AUB campus and bussed to the airport. From then on, we who remained were under guard all the time going to and from the embassy. It was all sort of silly, but we felt in a pretty much war-like mood. We didn't know which way things were going. Then Nasser was whipped very speedily, in six days, I think, and he resigned as president of Egypt.

Q: It was a six-day war.

MAK: Yes. Nasser resigned, and that brought out the crowds again surging through the streets, smashing western and "Christian" signs and windows and gunning for the American embassy. It was a very tense period. Everything was shut down in Beirut. And then Nasser decided to withdraw his resignation, and then there were more demonstrations. So it was really sort of hectic. It really was a pretty hectic period.

I remember during that time our dependents were all gone, and the city was dead, just dead. No planes were coming in, no boats going by, no traffic, just tanks around the embassy, and we felt very sorry for ourselves. I had a call then from a friend of mine in the Lebanese Foreign Office, Jean Riachi, I remember, Jean said, "Dayton, how about going to the beach today?"

I said, "What?"

He said, "Sure. Come on, I'll pick you up." So he picked me up at noon in his expensive Italian vehicle. I can't even remember the name of it, it was so expensive. We went down to the beach, and there were the Lebanese having a marvelous time. They were all on the

Library of Congress

beach playing beach ball, volleyball, and all the girls in their bikinis lying around, everyone eating and drinking.

I thought, "Boy, this really shows you how your mind can get the better of you." From then on I thought, "The hell with it. I'll go where I want to go in Beirut." Up until then I really felt that I was practically in jail. But in a few weeks the dependents came home, and everything went along just as though nothing had happened, except, of course, from then the Palestinian problem got worse.

Q: And we were reporting on it, seeing it, but there wasn't—

MAK: That's when we were reporting daily on what the Palestinians were doing and saying what the Lebanese were thinking about, what the Foreign Office was doing about it, and what they could possibly do to maintain their own position in this country.

Q: There's been, of course, a prohibition for many years, which has just been lifted with them this year to a limited extent, of dealing with the People's Palestinian Liberation Organization or anything to do with them. You're an Arabic speaker, you're a political officer, you have a lot of Palestinians and a lot of things that were happening and there was just beginning really to turn into a major element within Lebanon. Did you have any contact at all with people who would be considered Palestinian leaders?

MAK: I don't remember having contact with any of them, no. Our contacts would be largely with Lebanese who were their spokesmen, who were their allies. And there were many of them, both in the press and politics. But, no. They didn't seek us out, and we didn't seek them out.

Q: Was there a prohibition?

MAK: No.

Library of Congress

Q: Was the feeling that this was a no-no, or there just wasn't any point in trying to talk to them?

MAK: Well, at that point they really hadn't become a force in Lebanon politics. They were an extraneous element and they weren't terribly important. Obviously, history shows that they were growing in importance, but there were no prohibitions against them. They just weren't an element at the time.

Q: Well, did you go down into southern Lebanon and travel around and see what was happening down there?

MAK: Oh, yes, we would. We'd go down there fairly often. It was always a little dicey, because even when I was there in '68, '69, the Shiites were not happy with us at all. I remember going to one reception given by a local sheik down there, and it was obvious that we were Americans. The American ambassador, Dwight Porter, was there. Someone had strewn nails and tacks so our police escort jeeps got flat tires, and there would sometimes be people lining the roads throwing little stones at our convoy as we passed.

It wasn't a major problem, but it was a growing problem. It was not terribly pleasant going down there. But we continued to call on the major sheiks there. A couple of times I called on—and one time with the ambassador, another time alone—on Sheik Musa Sadr, head of the Shiite religious element, I believe in Tyre, the fellow who went to Libya and was never heard of since. He was the leading Shiite in the country at the time. I remember accompanying the Ambassador on a visit to Musa Sadr in his home—really a weird, weird character—and calling on the Druze leader down there, Sheik Majid Arslan, and all the local dignitaries.

Q: Well, when you call on them, what did this mean? When you call on the Shiite leader, was there any meaningful conversation?

Library of Congress

MAK: Well, not very meaningful, no. They would know in advance—this would all be arranged in advance—that we would be coming, and we would either have lunch or tea, and the conversation would always, if there was anything substantive, be about one of two things—who's going to be president, if there was going to be a presidential election, or the Palestinian problem in its many aspects.

These people were always interested in the water diversion schemes because they were right in their back yard. They were always interested in what the Israelis are doing and when the United States was going to stop supporting Israel and help the Palestinians get back their country.

Q: We were talking about the atmosphere in Lebanon concerning spies. I wonder if you could talk a little about the atmosphere in Lebanon concerning spies from your experience.

MAK: Well, the gathering of intelligence, both by the people we didn't want gathering intelligence and our own, was really one of our prime considerations. Beirut was loaded with such people, official and unofficial.

Q: Free lance and this? [Chuckles]

MAK: Yes. Practically everyone you would meet—correspondents or business people or parliamentarians, anyone—was in the market as buyer or seller of intelligence of any kind. It didn't really matter which side they were on or you were on, nearly everything could be sold for a price. You had to really live with that in mind. Everything you said, everything you did, you realized would get back to somebody, probably for a price.

Generally it didn't matter because the things that we were doing in Beirut were of little importance to the rest of the world. They were probably important to a certain segment of us and our immediate neighbors, but to not much else. But anyway, the Russians were terribly active in trying to bug our embassy, and succeeding, at least once to my knowledge. And they tried to subvert personnel in the embassy, by buying their services.

Library of Congress

It was a little bit like that cartoon in Mad magazine, "Spy vs. Spy," and probably was just about as productive.

Q: It shows people blowing each other up, and in each one there are traps and counter traps and counter-counter traps, and that sort of thing.

MAK: Right. There were so many funny things. Someone would throw a stick of dynamite at the embassy. No one ever really knew why or who did it, they just did strange things. The Soviets would try to embarrass us by making up a forged letter, a letter ostensibly from the U.S. ambassador Meyer to the Secretary of State saying we ought to support such-and-such candidate and get rid of so-and-so, demonstrating that the U.S. was interfering in the Lebanese presidential elections. The letter contained obvious errors in choice of words or errors in grammar presumably to let us know that they knew that we knew that they had done it, but the Lebanese wouldn't be convinced of this. I mean, it was sort of cutsie. It did a little bit of damage, but mainly it was just part of the scene.

Q: Well, I have to ask, did they ever use any of the bikini-clad young ladies down on the beach for this sort of thing?

MAK: Well, I'm sure they did.

Q: I spent 30 years in the diplomatic service and kept waiting, with no luck. [Chuckles]

MAK: No. We had a number of people try to do it, but they were not bikini-clad. One was red-headed Olga. It was peculiar. She had been a Soviet spy, but she fell in love with somebody on the other side, a Canadian, I believe, and defected. We had to keep her under wraps for a long time and finally smuggled her out on an airplane. Luckily, Pan Am went through Beirut. But no bikini-clads. Everybody wanted to come in and give us information.

Library of Congress

Q: How about the press corps? Again, when I was in Saudi Arabia, I had the impression, and I got this from my colleagues, that you had almost all Middle East problems, which was boiling at the time, were reported on by a bunch of reporters that did nothing but sit at the bar at the St. Georges Hotel and listen to stories and swap stories and then report as though they were on the scene somewhere. How did you find the press corps—the American, but also the international press corps—on its reporting, and how did you deal with them?

MAK: Well, we didn't have all that many Americans stationed in Beirut that I remember, and they were all darn good. The one I remember best was Joe Alec Morris, who was absolutely topnotch. You know, I'm afraid it's my memory that's bad, really. The New York Times fellow, I think he's now with the Washington Post, (Jim Hoagland, I think it was). And Dana Adams Schmidt was there, and Dana was good. They didn't sit at the bar of the St. Georges really, although they would, sure, and they'd talk to people, but they would talk to us, they would talk to all elements.

Beirut was a good place to gather intelligence about the countries in the area, because in most of the countries, they weren't allowed to, and the local Beirut press was very open. It wasn't necessarily accurate, but it was very, very open. Beirut had a lot of newspapers reporting everything that went on everywhere and a lot of things that didn't go on. But for an intelligent fellow like Joe Alec Morris or Dana Adams Schmidt or these others, they could sift through it and get pretty much accurate stuff, and they would check it with us. We were open with them, because there really wasn't much to be secretive about in Beirut that was in our real national interest.

Q: Well, speaking of national interest, one of the remarks that is prevalent is that American interests abroad are mainly economic. In Lebanon, did we have any major economic interests that were driving us, can you think of?

Library of Congress

MAK: I would think our major interest in Lebanon from an economic standpoint would be the fact that two pipelines ended up in—

Q: It was called tap line.

MAK: Well, tap line in the south and another one up in the north.

Q: That was the one from Iraq.

MAK: Yes, from Iraq and came out near Tripoli. And keeping those open was important, but that primarily was not a matter of Lebanese concern. It was a matter of what happened in Syria and Jordan and in Israel. As for Lebanon, we had interests there. It was an entrep#t for the rest of the country—I mean, for the rest of the Levant and for Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, even Syria to a certain extent. It was an excellent place for American companies (particularly banks) who had operations throughout the Middle East to have their headquarters. The climate was good, communications excellent, and the government and society receptive to their unhindered operations.

But our trade with Lebanon was peanuts compared to other countries. They wanted us to buy their apples, which is about the only thing we—well, we didn't need that. And we were not a major supplier to Lebanon. No, I'd say Beirut was primarily a listening post and sort of a good place to meet representatives of the other countries on a friendly and more agreeable soil.

Q: Is there anything more you'd like to add?

MAK: No, I don't think so.

Q: Well, you left Beirut in 1969, and then you went to the National War College from '69 to '70. And then you were in Intelligence and Research from '70 to '71, and then you left the

Library of Congress

Foreign Service. As an Arabist and all, it looked like you were sort of on the track for doing things. Why did you leave at that point?

MAK: There are two basic reasons, maybe three. The main reason was that my mother was very sick. My father had developed Parkinson's and, as I mentioned earlier, he had a very small brokerage firm in Iowa and he had come to the point where he felt he couldn't run it alone. He would have to cash it in, pay a large capital gains tax on his shares in the firm to liquidate it, and that would cut down his income drastically. So he asked me if I would come home and take it over, and I thought I should do it. I thought that's the thing I should do.

At the same time, I had worked very hard in INR and had been terribly busy.

Q: You were in what?

MAK: INR. I was the Chief of Near East-South Asia Section in States' Bureau of Intelligence and Research.

Q: Oh, boy.

MAK: And it was a very busy time. It was day and night and weekends and just going on really pretty much. You know, I just really didn't want to go on doing this very long, so I thought, "Well, now, what are the possibilities?" I felt I was in line to be an ambassador, and I said, "But where? Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, Bahrain, Baghdad?" I said, "I don't want to go to any of those places." I have lived a lot of my life in that area, and I found it very worthwhile. I loved it. But that's not where I wanted to spend the rest of my life, my career.

And I must say, at the same time I felt that the Department of State was going through a very peculiar period in which people who were deciding things in my areas were not terribly sympathetic to Arabists. And I thought, "Why go through years of frustration when I have an opportunity to have a career that I felt a sense of obligation to do?" And, also, I

Library of Congress

thought I might find it worthwhile and interesting, and I felt that I should do it for a change. So I did.

Q: Just to continue the story, how did you find it as a—

MAK: Well, I hated every minute of it. [Laughter] I found that, you know, many of my friends, my close friends, were still there and they were very kind to me, but we had very little in common anymore. I found living in my hometown, which had changed drastically, was to me ugly, unattractive, not the place I cared to live.

My mother died shortly after my arrival. My father was sick. Everything was a problem, everything. I moved into a beautiful house. It was wonderful, but it was too big and I didn't feel at home. Because of the illness of my parents, I didn't feel like making a lot of new friends. I felt it was my duty to devote to them. So as soon as I could, I got out. My mother died and my father died, and I left.

Q: Well, looking back on your Foreign Service career, as you know, you've done these interviews yourself, there are two questions asked. What gave you the greatest satisfaction?

MAK: I think there's no doubt. My time in London. My time in London was fascinating. I worked with some of the brightest people I've ever known, the kindest people I've ever known. I had the most responsible jobs in my whole career in the Foreign Service were in London. There were the most fascinating problems that I had to deal with, not necessarily at a upper level, I don't mean that.

Q: You were feeling you were accomplishing.

MAK: I felt I was accomplishing something. I know that I was respected. I felt that I did my best work there. It was exhilarating in every way, and I worked my tail off.

Library of Congress

Q: Well, again, the final question. A young person comes to you and says, "Mr. Mak, what about the Foreign Service as a career today?" How would you or do you respond to such a question?

MAK: I would say the Foreign Service has changed immensely since I was in it. I think it is probably the most fascinating career still that one can ever get into. It is for anyone who really wants an exciting career, that's it. He should be aware of two things. One, he's never going to get rich out of it. Two, he's never going to be appreciated. But I still believe it's the most inwardly rewarding career that I can think of.

The dangers that you are in—and there are always dangers. There always has been, and there always will be. Physical dangers to you and your family, but that adds zest to the whole thing. It's exciting. You're confronted with so many different problems. You're never stuck on one thing. If you're going to sell automobiles all your life, you've got to make your intellectual interests something else besides automobiles. You just can't exist on automobiles or nearly anything else that I can think of. But in the Foreign Service, the variety of problems and questions is just limitless. You have constant, constant chance to improve yourself. You can learn a new language. Every post gives you the opportunity to learn a new language if you want to. And if you don't, you're missing out on something. I'm not a believer that the best ambassador is one who speaks the language of the country. I don't think that has very much to do with it. But I think that knowing the language of the country, even a little bit of it, is going to improve your appreciation of your job and of the country immeasurably. You're going to enjoy it. You're going to enjoy greeting people with the little bit that you know and adding to it. There's so many dimensions to the Foreign Service that our so rewarding. I don't know, other than academia, I don't where you could possibly live as full a life intellectually and physically as you can in the Foreign Service.

Q: Well, Dayton, I thank you very much for this. This has been fun.

MAK: Thank you.

Library of Congress

[Transcription of a recording done at the request of the U.S. embassy in Kuwait regarding the history of that establishment]

I'm Dayton Mak, here in Washington D.C. I served as Charg# d'Affaires of our Embassy in Kuwait from mid-1961 until mid-1963. When I was asked by Hermann Eilts in the Department if I would be interested in going to Kuwait as Charg# d'Affaires, I was, of course, interested, but having served in Saudi Arabia and Libya previously I knew a bit about what I was getting into and I wasn't too sure that I wanted to run through all that again. However, because the Consulate, which it was then, was going to be elevated to the rank of Embassy shortly after my arrival in Kuwait I thought it might be very interesting and certainly a step up. So I did agree that I would go.

I remember that we landed in Kuwait on a very hot day, it always seemed to be hot in Kuwait in the summertime anyway. We landed on the airport which is located now...I would say it is between the second and third ring roads which in today's Kuwait is somewhat near the center of the city. It was very hot when we landed and as you can imagine, for anyone who has been in that part of the world, it was rather a shock to come down onto what looked like a limitless desert with a few tiny buildings and a little bit of encampment around the area. When we got on the ground it was still terribly, terribly hot, but all those tiny little buildings turned out to be rather substantial structures, and the city didn't look bad at all. We arrived at the Consulate in due time, and I was rather appalled to see the condition of the Consulate. You may have seen from old photos that the original consulate was an Arab-style building of stucco type over some sort of brick or something, with a roof that was apparently either of reed or palm frond or something that let in the water when you had the periodic deluges of Kuwait in the proper season. Anyway, we weren't in the Consulate very long; a new compound had been built adjacent to the Consulate, which as you may know is adjacent to the palace grounds of Sheikh Abdallah Jabir the then Minister of Health, I believe he was, at that time.

Library of Congress

The new Embassy compound, into which we moved about two weeks after our arrival, was pretty much a square acreage smack on the Persian Gulf and just about as barren as any spot of desert you could find. There was hardly a blade of grass—in fact there was no grass. There were some palm trees that were perhaps a foot high and some tamarisks that were a little taller that had been rather imaginatively and attractively planted throughout the compound, but other than that there was no greenery whatsoever. There were three structures on the compound property; one was the Embassy residence which was about twenty-five yards from the water. A square building, large enough, it had five bedrooms, I believe, three baths, a nice reception room, a dining room, a small library or study, a kitchen and appurtenances. In addition there was the Consulate building, or the Embassy Chancery, about twenty-five yards back from the Residence, which was a long, low, flat building and I think still serves as the basic Chancery building now in Kuwait, although I trust they have added another story and enlarged it quite a bit. To the left of that as you faced the water there was a large apartment house structure which was the staff apartments. This is the building which was partially destroyed in the bombing several years ago in Kuwait which led to the loss of life at that time.

We were really rather comfortable in the new compound; it was attractively furnished, with basic easy-to-maintain furniture and yet attractive, as I say. Our staff was tiny—there were five American officers and three American clerks. I was the Charg# and the others were political officers and consular officers and one economic officer who served as my number two. The local staff was also very small; we had about four clerks, including two consulate clerks, an economic clerk, and an information or USIA clerk—that was Fauzi Dalloul who I believe is still with the Embassy there. We didn't have very much of a work load at that time; I don't really remember how many visas we issued per month - primarily to local merchants who wanted to travel to the United States for one reason or another.

The American community probably didn't amount to over a couple of hundred; those were primarily from the Kuwait Oil Company and most of them lived at Ahmadi thirty-five

Library of Congress

miles away down the coast, and from companies such as Bechtel, Schlumberger, Getty Oil Company, Aminoil Company, and a few other construction companies that had to do with developing oil properties in the Gulf and on the land. So it was really not a very large American community and it was not a particularly close-knit community. The various companies were spread all over Kuwait and the Neutral Zone with really only a handful living in Kuwait town. This meant that each group was pretty much on its own, although from time to time groups of them would come into the Embassy and would come and swim on our beach and play volleyball with us and sometimes use the tennis court. Then, of course, on the Fourth of July we would have them all in for a party which they all seemed to enjoy. But basically each community sort of survived on its own. There wasn't a great deal of mixing in the social life among any of the groups.

We had no American school in Kuwait. When we arrived there we had a daughter who was to go into third grade. The British did have a school there but, as I recall, after third grade the British children all went back home to England to school. So our daughter had one year of schooling at the British school in Kuwait and after that we had to find some alternative. So what we did was to apply to the Calvert school, I believe it is in Baltimore, a correspondence course school. We found a very fine Palestinian woman, the wife of Awani Nahkli whom you may still remember, and she set up a school in part of our Embassy Chancery building. I think there were about five or six students, one or two from the American community there, and I believe one or two Palestinian children. This turned out to be quite a good school and my daughter went there for all the time we were in Kuwait—until two years later when we were transferred back to the States.

I mentioned earlier that when I arrived in Kuwait and for the first few weeks we were a Consulate. Sometime shortly thereafter we became an Embassy when Kuwait itself changed its treaty relationship with Britain and became what we called totally independent. I was immediately appointed *Chargé d'Affaires de Jure*, I think they called me, because we had no Ambassador appointed. Subsequently Parker Hart, who was Ambassador in

Library of Congress

Saudi Arabia and to Yemen, was named Ambassador to Kuwait as well; non-resident, but resident in Saudi Arabia. So I then became Chargé d'Affaires ad Interim.

I am completely unclear in my mind as to which came first, Kuwait independence, our Fourth of July party or the trouble with Iraq, so I will go ahead blindly and you can fill in the proper date sequence here. Kuwait became independent and at that time there was a great deal of celebrating to be done. The Kuwaitis had a big parade, they had enormous fireworks at night, a great, great display, there was a lot of visiting going on, many public functions that I was required to attend, many diwans to visit and many formal calls to make. It really was a very exciting time and the only problem was that it was in mid-summer and it was dreadfully, dreadfully hot. Anyone who knows about Kuwait knows that in the summertime Kuwait can be something like 115 or 120 degrees Fahrenheit and that is really something. It was terribly hot! Anyway it was very exciting and I found it terribly interesting.

The next thing of importance was our Fourth of July Party which to me was quite an event. It provided the first possibility for all the Kuwaiti merchants and Kuwaiti sheikhs, the ruling family and so forth, to come and visit the new Embassy building and to pay their respects to me and the American government. They did, they came in droves, and they were all fascinated to see this new Embassy compound. It was really, despite its austerity, a very handsome building and quite different from anything that you saw in Kuwait at that time. I was proud of it and they all seemed to be impressed by the new building and the new compound. It did give me a chance of course to meet many of these merchants and sheikhs of the royal family and others. As I say, it was really a very worthwhile experience.

Probably the most important thing that happened other than the independence of Kuwait was the threat issued by Prime Minister Qasim of Iraq against Kuwait. Qasim in one of his speeches after Kuwait had proclaimed its independence laid claim to Kuwait saying that Kuwait was an integral part of Iraq. Well this immediately got everyone up in arms. The British, in particular, who had just changed their relationship with Kuwait immediately

Library of Congress

came to Kuwait's rescue. They took this threat by Qasim very, very seriously and sent in a couple of aircraft carriers—actually as I recall they were helicopter carriers—some troop transports and destroyers and so forth. So we really had quite a flotilla moving into Kuwait harbor on that hot, hot summer's day. It was a very tense time but perhaps the whole thing sounded a little bit more tense outside than it really was inside. Very few people that I talked to in Kuwait, either among the Kuwaitis or among the British really thought that Qasim intended to come in and take over Kuwait. Particularly after the British moved in with their ships and landed their forces, it seemed pretty unrealistic that Qasim would try to move in. Anyway, he didn't and things died down after awhile. The British troops left, there was a lot of folderol about who would replace them to protect Kuwait and finally they came up with some solution whereby Arab League forces, who were largely Saudi, Jordanian, and/or Egyptian, would come in or be nearby to take over from the British in case Qasim should threaten again. However, all this sort of died away. Kuwait was, as I remember, not very happy about having Saudi Arabia come in and protect its interests; they were not particularly interested in Egypt either, though Egypt was probably a bit safer because Egypt was farther away. But Nasserism was sort of a threat or at least a nervous-making element in Kuwait in those days. Anyway it all seemed to die down and pretty soon the whole thing was practically forgotten.

From then on Kuwait seemed to be turning its attention away from a threat from anyone toward economic matters. I think perhaps an outgrowth of all of this sensitivity in the Arab world to the wealth of Kuwait was the plan which was formulated with the help of some American leaders and others, which resulted in the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development. The Kuwaitis, I think, realized that they couldn't be sitting on all this wealth without having to pay some sort of price, so they very cleverly, on their own and with help, devised this fund which was designed to help Arab countries with their economic problems. This was a many, many million dollar fund which was established and as I remember was very helpful to Sudan and even to Egypt and to other Arab countries. I don't know whatever happened to it, perhaps it is still in existence; I don't know.

Library of Congress

The Embassy workload was really rather light. Our primary interest was, of course, economic. The Americans, through the Kuwait Oil Company, Gulf Oil, were concerned with petroleum production and the marketing thereof. Likewise there was Getty Oil in the Saudi half of the Kuwait-Saudi Neutral Zone and the American Independent Oil Company down in the Kuwait half of the Neutral Zone. So we had to keep close touch with these oil companies, keep abreast of their problems and keep some eye on their production. In addition there were the Japanese, who had offshore interests and part of our job was to try to keep track of their problems and their production. This wasn't easy because they were pretty close-mouthed about their operations, but I think we eventually got what we wanted.

We did have other economic interests there, primarily commercial. General Motors and Ford both had substantial outlets there in Kuwait, and other manufacturing companies did too. However, it was a rather strange situation; the Kuwaiti merchants were very interested in expanding their businesses and getting more and more American products into the country and they would ask our assistance in getting American companies interested in allowing them to establish dealerships in the country and to provide them with the American products. You would think that the American producers and American manufacturers would be terribly interested in exploiting this marvelous market, but they didn't seem to be interested at all. Even Ford and General Motors had a terrible time getting their quota of vehicles, and spare parts were almost impossible to get. We would wring our hands and apologize and do all sorts of things but somehow we could just not seem to get the American manufacturers interested in servicing the Kuwait public, which was so very, very wealthy even then.

There were a couple of exceptions to that; I believe it was Lear Jet sent a team out there with one of its Lear Executive Jets and took a number of the officials up for exciting rides in the jet, but I don't think they ever sold any. Tiffany, the jewelers in New York, also sent a man out with brochures and a whole packet of slides showing these very, very expensive jewels. We, in due course, got him appointments with various of the wealthy merchants

Library of Congress

and sheikhs of the royal family there in Kuwait and he would show them all of these slides and they were very, very interested, but it turned out that Kuwaitis were not interested in buying anything from a picture on a slide. They would only buy the real thing which is brought out and inspected by their own people, then they would buy it. Tiffany went home with its slides and I don't think they sold anything directly, but it was an interesting experience anyway.

We were pretty much of a basic Embassy. Our telegrams we would type out on a local form, take it down to the local telegraph office and send it off. Now this, of course, was quite adequate until we had real problems; in other words when the threat of Iraq happened this was no longer possible. So we had really a terrible time. Very quickly the Department put us "on line", I think they call it; they improved the communications so that we were in direct communications with Washington. We didn't really have any problem as far as transferring funds or procuring food, and I don't really remember why, but everything seemed to work pretty well. There was a good banking system in Kuwait; no American banks but plenty of British and Kuwait and there seemed to be no problem. Supplies—we didn't seem to need a lot of supplies and they came in adequately by air. There was fairly good air service to Kuwait at the time. Food—we didn't really need to import food, the Kuwaitis had one or two supermarkets as they called them, they are probably no bigger than a drug store in Washington, D.C., or smaller. They sold quite a good array of products. They were quite expensive of course, but we didn't really suffer from the lack of any food. Also the local market, the souk, was pretty adequate; they had marvelous fish, Kuwait being right on the sea, and the Kuwaitis were fish-eaters and they had quite a market going for that. The shrimp were wonderful; very wonderful and very cheap. We could put fish and all sorts of seafood in our deep freeze and keep until we needed it for some reception or dinner or something like that. So we really weren't suffering. True, we didn't have beef but nearly anything else that could be canned or preserved. Most of the food came from Beirut through the Abella supermarket. As I say, we lived quite happily.

Library of Congress

In those days any foreigner was allowed to have a ration card for alcohol. Of course many of the Kuwaitis had their servants provide them with their alcohol, so alcohol was not a problem as far as supply was concerned. Of course you didn't see any alcohol at any of the official functions of the Kuwaitis, the functions that were provided by the members of the royal family or top members of the government. However, others in the government, particularly some of the Palestinian or Lebanese officials in the government, would openly serve alcohol at their dinner parties and other parties.

How was our business conducted? Business in Kuwait was conducted on a very personal basis. I myself, as Charg# d'Affaires—incidentally as you may know the rank of Consul is much higher in the eyes of people out there, the Arabs, than that of Charg# d'Affaires, which really didn't mean a lot to them. The Consul was someone who was pretty important and the doors opened for him, but for the Charg# d'Affaires well it was sort of “what is that?” So as Consul I visited many, many merchants, and what one would do is—during the day I would drop in to various establishments, and with my Arabic which was no more than adequate, we would discuss the time of day, how's business and all of that sort of thing. If I found that there was some interest in establishing a relationship with an American firm or they needed some help, I would then go along with an interpreter and discuss it more thoroughly, or just send an interpreter alone. Our interpreter being the local Arab assistant in the commercial section of the Embassy.

The government officials were always very helpful. I found the Kuwaitis very, very receptive to having you drop in on them, without appointment or with appointment, and discuss just about anything, including items in the newspaper. It didn't have to be any particular business. In fact we had very little official business dealings with the Kuwaitis at that time. It was mainly keeping a close relationship with them, letting them know that we were represented in the country, were at their disposal and that we were interested in their welfare as a nation. I think they appreciated that, I found it very interesting and enjoyable.

Library of Congress

Most of the Kuwaiti government officials spoke only Arabic; the higher up you got the less English they spoke. The Emir, Emir Abdullah, for instance spoke no English at all, so when I spoke with him I had to have an interpreter. Generally it would be his interpreter who would be there, either Bader al Mullah or one of his other people, Abdul Assiz Hussein was one, and I have forgotten the names of most of the others. The number two, and his successor, Sheikh Sabah Salim, also spoke no English; well he spoke a tiny bit, but in order to speak with him you would have to get an interpreter. There again he used his man in his office to act as interpreter and keep notes and that sort of thing. The present ruler, Abdullah Jabar, who was then Minister of Finance, does speak English very well and one needed no interpreter for him. Sheikh Sabah Salim's son, Sheikh Salim Sabah, also would sometimes interpret for his father.

These people, the government officials and particularly the Sabahs, were very generous about entertaining in the evening. For instance the Emir, Sheikh Abdullah, would periodically have dinners for the foreign diplomatic corps, which was tiny, and some of the local merchants and others on his staff. These generally were held very early in the evening, I think around 5:00 or 5:30 in the afternoon, or maybe 6:00 o'clock, but it was always terribly hot at that hour. These were feasts of lamb or mutton and with chickens and so forth, but it was generally what we used to call "the old sheep grab." They were very elaborate affairs with five or six or seven sheep strung out over a long table with all of us sitting around it and we would eat our fill. As we wished, one by one we would get up and go wash our hands...

SIDE 2: ...the Emir would come and join us later on and after about a twenty minute discussion through the interpreter with whomever the Emir wished to speak, he would leave and we would all go on home. One of the habits that Emir Abdullah had was to hold a special sort of little diwan or meeting of the wives, the women, who would all gather round him, and he enjoyed that very much.

Library of Congress

Our social life in Kuwait was not terribly exciting. We in the American Embassy compound had it over most of the Americans living in Kuwait, and as I say there were not very many. First of all we had this pretty marvelous beach right at our doorstep so a lot of times we would be down at the beach during the day and even in the evening enjoying the cool water. We also had our tennis court which we used, particularly as a volleyball court. The volleyball court seemed to be very popular with us and some of our friends, many of whom were Lebanese and Palestinian. On Friday, on Saturday afternoons when it got cooler, and after spending a certain time on the beach, we would go to the tennis court and put up our volleyball net and have a number of sets of volleyball. Then I would generally invite the American staff to the residence where we would have a light supper, popcorn, and a movie. We were very fortunate to have nearby to have an American woman who provided, on a rental basis, movies to the various oil camps around the area, American oil camps. She had quite an inventory of up-to-date films which she would lend us and we would show these films at least once a week there at the residence for the benefit of the staff and any guests they might like to bring in. So we had a certain amount of togetherness with the staff at the residence every week. Perhaps it was too much, I don't know, but no one was obliged to come who didn't want to come. Nearly everyone did come.

There wasn't a lot of mixing with the Kuwaitis. Most of the Kuwaiti wives were not educated and not particularly interested in meeting American women or other foreigners at all; and their husbands weren't particularly interested in having their wives meet these people. In addition very few of the Kuwaitis spoke English very well or were interested in entertaining foreigners. One particular exception was the current Emir, Jabar al Ahmed, he was then Minister of Finance and used to give very elaborate dinner parties for any important businessman or government official who came to Kuwait. In particular he seemed to like David Rockefeller, who at that time was trying to get an opening for the Chase Manhattan Bank in Kuwait. I think he was very fond of David. He would entertain him and his wife whenever he came, and any other American dignitary of particularly high rank in Sheikh Jabar's estimation. Sheikh Sabah Salim was very kind and invited my wife and me along

Library of Congress

with his chief assistant and his wife to come to his home to watch a movie and have some soft drinks and sometimes have dinner. Some of the other Kuwaitis like Sheikh Salim Sabah, Sabah Salim's son, was very kind to me and used to take me riding at the police academy where we would ride horses belonging either to the Sheikh himself or the police academy and we would sometimes even ride camels which was quite a rare treat. I have some photos of me on a camel, which are rather ridiculous.

There were a few other Kuwaitis who were very helpful and very sociable. I would include in those Abdul Ali Reza who was actually of a Saudi family and who built our Embassy compound in Kuwait. There was Jassem Katami who is still in the news. There was Rashid al Rashid who was in the Foreign Office and had been a champion runner at AUB, who along with his wife was very friendly and helpful to us. Another one particularly helpful was Faisal Mazed, who handled petroleum matters at the time and who helped negotiate the final agreement between the KOC and the Kuwait government, I believe it was in 1962 or 1963. I remember Faisal (?) was a man I called upon to help translate with Sheikh Sabah Salim when I was asked by the Department to transmit the letter asking Kuwait's support in the Cuban missile crisis. This was beyond my Arabic and I had no one on hand to help me so I turned to Faisal Mazed whom I rounded out of bed and who very graciously helped. I mentioned that Sheikh Sabah Salim was particularly friendly and as a matter of fact had sent over to me one day a Piaget wrist watch for me and a string of Persian Gulf pearls for my wife, not realizing that we couldn't accept such gifts. I had to go the next day and explain how much I appreciated the gesture and how much I regretted that I was unable to accept the gifts because of government regulations. Sabah Sabah Salim took that very well, and as a matter of fact I wonder if he didn't know already that I couldn't accept them—I don't know.

Another very impressive person and one whom I found delightful in every way was Sheikh Saad Abdullah who is now I believe the Crown Prince, or called the Crown Prince of Kuwait. He was at that time Minister of Defense and he used to discuss with me fairly often the possibility of our providing Kuwait with various planes, weapons and so forth, but

Library of Congress

nothing ever came of that because the British were pretty well tied in there. I do remember, however, speaking to him one day about the Kuwaiti decision to allow the Russians to establish an Embassy in Kuwait. I told Sheikh Saad, "You know they aren't coming in because they love you, they will be coming in here trying to undermine you and who is going to keep an eye on all these people?" He sort of looked at me and laughed with a twinkle in his eye and said, "Well I expect you Americans to do that." Anyway there it is. Another very useful person and very capable was someone who I believe is still in the government, Abdul Aziz Hussein. There was also Tallot Ghosson who was helpful in the Foreign Office, and then our old neighbor and friend Abdullah Jabar who's palace was right next door to the embassy. Abdullah Jabar was an interesting man. I would hate to say how old he was then, but he was fairly old at the time; he was called "the marrying Sheikh"; he was a man who didn't believe in concubines but he loved young women and he would find a beautiful woman (often a Westerner) and he would marry her. He was allowed several wives and I never knew for sure how many he had at any one time. He would stroll along the beach from his palace grounds across in front of ours picking up oyster shells. One time I asked him why he was doing this. He said, "Oh yes, but look at the beautiful pearls I found in them." Apparently he actually found pearls in these oyster shells. He was a delightful man who was sometimes maligned, but he was very nice.

There were several Kuwaiti families in Kuwait who were very kind to us too. Generally they were the Al-Ghonims. The Al-Ghonims and the Al-Mullahs and the Ali Rezas, and the Marzouks. They were all sort of related, except for the Ali Rezas. It is very interesting that the Marzouks and the Al-Mullahs and the Al-Ghonims, all of whom are related, really made their connection with the Embassy through our two very attractive and very capable American stenographers, Nancy Chippendale and Virginia Cheslick. These two young girls were really "adopted" by these Kuwaiti families. The wives and mothers of the Sheikhs and their children really considered them as their daughters. They would send their chauffeur-driven cars to pick up the girls to take them to their homes and they would be given dinners and lunches, the run of the whole household with their swimming pools and so

Library of Congress

forth. These girls really introduced the Consulate, and later the Embassy, to many of these Kuwaiti families, all of whom had the utmost respect for these very highly intelligent and respectable young women. I can't say enough about their high qualities and how much they did for us at the Embassy.

There wasn't an awful a lot to do in Kuwait as you can imagine in those days. I don't know that there is anymore now, but a couple of the things were of interest. There was one movie theater which foreigners and women could attend. You had to make reservations in advance and you generally had to sit in a certain section of the theater. The movies were basically American movies and modern ones. In fact I remember seeing "West Side Story" there in 1962 or 1963. Also in Kuwait there were large Lebanese, Palestinian, and Egyptian communities. These people were quite a bit different from the Kuwaitis and had a very much more liberalized idea of social life and so forth. They gave a lot of parties. There was a lot of dancing and we were invited, everyone in the Consulate was invited to these parties. One could really be going all the time in Kuwait, at least on the weekends, if one had a mind to. These were also the same people whom we would invite to our beach on the weekends to enjoy the cool of the water.

Our good friend Bader Al-Mullah who was the Secretary to the Emir, was a very pro-western young man and was an integral part of our social life at the Embassy. Bader was a very adventurous young man and he decided that he wanted to do something quite different in the way of entertainment, and he invited the Cypress Gardens troop of water skiers and acrobatic skiers to come to Kuwait to perform. Where to perform, that was the big problem. I offered him the use of the Embassy beach. Bader Al-Mullah had stands built in front of the Embassy residence right on the water edge and these young performers from Cypress Gardens performed off the coast of the Embassy compound. They were really a terrific success. Afterward Bader gave quite a reception for them and there was a sort of gala feeling about the whole thing. Unfortunately Bader died of cancer a few years later, and I must say Kuwait probably missed him for a long time.

Library of Congress

The Kuwaitis themselves were great travelers. Every summer they would pick up, some of them chartering an entire aircraft, and take their entire families to the mountains of Beirut. This was a favorite spot and I am sure they all miss it very much now that Beirut is out of the question for them. Nearly everyone went somewhere for the summer, at least the Kuwaitis. The Emir, Emir Abdullah, for some strange reason always went to India; he liked Bombay. I think he liked the pretty girls there. The Persians, the Kuwaitis of Persian origin, of course, went to Isfahan, Tehran, and Shiraz during the summer and other times. Those of Iraq ancestry often would go up to Iraq, not that it was very cool up there. The Saudis, I suppose, to Saudi Arabia. But everyone did seem to go somewhere and we found that it was very easy to get into the habit of going off to Beirut ourselves, although it was fairly expensive to do so, or to Tehran, or Isfahan, or Shiraz, or someplace like that. Europe seemed an awful long way away and of course it was expensive to go there so generally people, at least on the Embassy staff, didn't go to Europe.

As for other types of recreation, I particularly enjoyed playing squash at what was then the secondary school and is now part of Kuwait University. There weren't too many squash players there, but there were some and they even had a pro who licked the socks off everyone there, of course. There was a swimming pool at the secondary school as well and a few of us would go there from time to time. One of the main things that I did and a few others of us did was go riding. As I mentioned earlier Sheikh Salim Sabah was a good friend of mine, and I would go with him to the police training school where they had a number of horses as well as camels and was invited to ride there any time I wished. Sheikh Salim had a certain group around him, sort of retainers and political followers who would go with him to ride and would form part of his own diwan. I would ride with them, including his younger brother Sheikh Ali and Sheikh Hamood Sabah who was some sort of cousin.

He was an interesting man, Sheikh Hamood was. He considered himself very much an Arab of the desert; he was not a city man, he said—incidentally he spoke almost

Library of Congress

no English, but we managed to get along pretty well with a smattering of English and a smattering of Arabic. Sheikh Hamood would go out for several months every year into the desert and live with the Bedouin tribes. His city cousins, primarily city people, made fun of him; they thought he was putting on this business of Arab of the desert, but I am sure he wasn't. He was really a very nice fellow, and very amusing. Sometimes after riding he would come by the Embassy residence and we would sit around and have a coca-cola, or something like that, he obviously didn't drink. One time he was sitting there afterward, my wife was sitting with us, and he said, "Mrs. Mak, I think Mr. Mak should stay here." She said, "Oh?" He said, "Yes, I think we should get him a Kuwaiti wife." Well that didn't go over terribly well. Another time he came and he saw that I had an oud (what we call a lute). He said, "I can play that." So he picked it up and sure enough he strummed the oud and sang some Arab songs for us. He was a delightful man. Another time I was riding with him around his compound, his sort of palace compound—any big house of a Sheikh is called a palace in Kuwait or was in those days. We were driving around after having a soft drink in his diwan. We were riding around in his brand new Mercedes; he still had the plastic covers on the seats. He said, "Mr. Mak, how do you like my new car?" I said, "Oh, its very nice, Sheikh Hamood." He said, "I want you to have it." Well I gulped, "Sheikh Hamood, sorry I cannot do that, I cannot accept this, its brand new, its yours, its beautiful but I don't want it." He thought a minute and said, "Mr. Mak, I'll get you one just like it." Well I had to tell him that I could not accept that either, but I appreciated it very much. He did the same thing again when we were in his palace listening to some phonograph records. He brought out one gold sword after another and tried to give one of them to me and I explained that I just simply couldn't do it. But you see how generous they are and how really simple and kind they were.

I think life in Kuwait must have been pretty difficult for the women, American women in particular. There wasn't much that they had in common with the Kuwaiti wives, so few of them spoke English, so few of them were interested in knowing Americans. They had their own family lives to think about; Americans came and went so there wasn't any particular

Library of Congress

point in getting acquainted. Consequently there was no real social life, there were plenty of teas and so forth among the various national groups in Kuwait. But for the woman I am sure it was rather difficult; she didn't have a lot to occupy her of real intellectual interest.

There were of course several women in Kuwait who were of importance in that area. One, of course, was Violet Dixon, who as far as I know is still there. I needn't tell you anything about Violet Dixon; she was a very, very dynamic woman, very knowledgeable, brilliant, very kind and very much in love with Kuwait. I remember one time we went to call on her, she offered us the usual tea, or a drink if you wanted it, and then she pulled out a basket of what looked like bits of straw. She said, "I would like to have you try this." We said, "What is it?" "Well they're locusts." We gulped and she said, "Try them, try them, they are not bad." So we each tried one and sure enough you crunched and you got a taste of salt and that's about it; not much taste to it, a little like chewing on salty straw. She laughed and said, "These are boiled in salt water and that is why they are salty and they are a very good source of protein to the Arabs of the desert. I just think you ought to try one." So I've tried one and I can guarantee that you can eat them that way without being sick.

Another person of interest in Kuwait is Dorothy Scudder. She and her husband, Lew Scudder, were missionary doctors in Kuwait; ran the hospital as well as the mission, Dutch Reformed Mission, and had done so for many years. They were wonderful people, very solid, very down-to-earth, not a bit pretentious, not a bit standoffish or holier than thou art. They were just terribly, terribly nice people who were interested in what they were doing and everyone around them. Dorothy Scudder, I understand, is still in Kuwait though I had thought she was living in Holland, Michigan; but if she is still there I certainly send my very best love and regards to both her and to Violet Dixon.

Life in Kuwait was not really very difficult; the heat, of course, was really pretty bad. I may recollect this falsely, but it seems to me that we had during one summer a full month when the temperature never went below 100 degrees. Now maybe that isn't right, but that is what I told people and it seems to me that that was so. Anyway the fact is that it

Library of Congress

just never got cool during the summer; never, never. Sometimes it went up to 118# and I think once up to 124#, boiling hot that is. This made life pretty difficult; if you didn't have air conditioning going all the time, you suffered. Kuwait in those days, and it may be true now, was a pretty difficult place for one to live for very long without getting away now and again. Particularly if you lived in the compound, which almost all of us did you were thrown together with all your associates in the Embassy all the time; that is both work and play and your social life. You simply never got away from one another. This, I think, is not a healthy situation and it definitely did cause some problems in our own Embassy while I was there. I found it pretty stultifying from that point of view, although we did have the blessings of having the beach there, the volleyball, the large Lebanese and Palestinian and Egyptian community to fall back on, and the movies and a nice place to live. So I do not think that I suffered at all in Kuwait, but I do think perhaps it is very difficult for many of the staff members to find it congenial there.

It was also sort of difficult to figure out where to go sometime to get away without leaving Kuwait entirely. There wasn't anything to see in the country, wherever you went there was desert. You could go up to Raudhatain, in the north, where the water came from. But that was no great shakes, and it wasn't terribly far and there wasn't really anything to do when you got there. The geography of the country was flat, flat, flat, with one exception in the north and that was the escarpment up near Raudhatain. You had the water, you could go to the island of Faylakah, which was sort of a one time deal as far as you were concerned. It was pretty much isolated and removed from the world in general. But other than the heat and the isolation I don't think we suffered really at all. It was a fairly healthy place—I did come down with typhoid myself, but I was the only one who did and God knows how I got it. Other than that we were pretty healthy. We had our usual bouts with dysentery but even that wasn't terribly bad. We did have the mission hospital nearby; we had some dental care. Anyway that was an interesting life in Kuwait in those days and I suppose it is still interesting. I hope that maybe this will be of some interest to you and your project.

ADDENDUM Added May 4, 2006

DHAHRAN AND JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA IN 1948 - 1950

DHAHRAN

The Saudi Arabia of today bears little resemblance to the country I knew in 1948 to 1950. Both the cities of Jeddah or Riyadh, as well as the area known as Dhahran, have grown so tremendously over the years that one would have great difficulty in locating the buildings or even the districts he knew so many years ago. My life in Saudi Arabia began with my assignment as Vice Consul to the American Consulate General at Dhahran, which is located near the Persian Gulf in the Eastern province of al Hassa. Within Dhahran were located the compound of The Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO), the Dhahran civil airport and the United States Air Force Dhahran Air Base

I arrived at Dhahran airport the day before Thanksgiving, 1948. I had flown from New York to Cairo and then on to Dhahran, stopping briefly at Aswan and Basra before the final leg of the journey. Shortly after leaving Basra and its vast orchards of date palms, the world suddenly changed from lush green to a world of unrelenting sand, stretching, on the right, into the distance; on the left was a seemingly endless landscape of pale greenish tan, the murky waters of the Persian Gulf. The sight of this vast area of emptiness made my heart sink. The deserts I had known were covered with vegetation and broken by outcroppings of colorful hills and mountains. This desert was a relentless sea of sand stretching as far as the eye could see. Our first indication of human habitation was the appearance of a cluster of buildings perched on an elevation, and in the far distance spots of flame and trails of smoke, the burning gasses in the oil fields. As we approached the coast, another cluster of buildings appeared; this was the Dhahran airport and Air Base.

Library of Congress

The acting Consul General, Frances Meloy, and his staff were there on the tarmac to welcome me. I was very grateful for their presence and welcome, and my spirits lifted. After passing through the Saudi document check, we hopped into jeeps and, along with my baggage, made our way over the sandy road to the office of The American Consulate General in Dhahran.

The Consulate building was located on the U.S. Air Base in a World War II Quonset hut, of which many were found on U.S. military installations throughout the world. This was to be not only my working quarters, but also my home. While it was not what one expected a consulate to look like, it was not out of place on an American air base in the deserts of Saudi Arabia. This structure, was appropriately known as the "Quonsulate" My living quarters and those of another officer were in one end of the building, and the consular offices occupied the remainder. Ten steps in the morning and I was at work. Though living and working in a Quonset was not gracious living, it was convenient and acceptable. While most of the staff lived in quarters in the Aramco compound, except for the consul general, we all took our meals at the Airbase mess hall, which was less than a hundred yards from the consulate.

The staff of the consulate consisted of the Acting Consul General, Francis Meloy and four Vice Consuls; Elmer Hulen, John Randolph, Donald Weymeyer and Dayton Mak. I have forgotten the names of the three clerks.

The climate of Dhahran was a problem. While the nights in winter could be cold, the days could also be uncomfortably hot. Yet neither the cold nor the heat was the major source of discomfort - it was the violent sand storms which would suddenly sweep in from the North, whipping the sand in a frenzied cloud, obliterating the landscape and driving sand and dust through doorways, windows and the slightest cracks in a building's structure. Venturing out into such a storm was thoroughly unpleasant and even dangerous, the flying

Library of Congress

sand obliterating the landscape, stinging ones skin and forcing its way into ears, nose and clothing.

While living conditions were marginal, working in the so Quonsulate was not unpleasant. The workload was not burdensome, and the members of the staff were competent and congenial. Consul General Meloy was a particularly competent and understanding chief, who took great pains to make life for us as agreeable as possible. After living in the quonsulate for several month, I was given quarters on the Aramco compound, sharing a one bedroom house on what was called "Easter Egg Row", a row of small houses painted in pastel shades of green yellow, blue and white. This was a distinct improvement from life in the quonsulate.

Aramco personnel were our primary clients. Their needs were relatively simple, primarily of a routine nature such as renewing passports, authenticating documents, etc. Representational duties consisted primarily of occasional visits to the local Amir in Dammam and a few other Saudi Arabian business and political persons, and we had daily contact with the American Air Force officers, upon whose base the consulate general was located. Reporting to the Department of State on the oil production of Aramco was not a responsibility of the consulate, this being handled by the U.S. embassy in Jeddah with Aramco's Jeddah office, and via Aramco's office in Washington, directly with the U.S. government departments. As the island of Bahrain fell within the Consulate's district, officers from the consulate visited the island on a rotation basis to perform consular services for the American employees of the Bahrain Petroleum company. This was a particularly welcome diversion since Bahrain was a lush, semi-tropical island with a long established business and residential community.

The social life for consulate personnel consisted largely of interaction with Aramco personnel and to a lesser extent with the Air Base personnel. Aramco generously permitted consular personnel to use its handsome club with its swimming pool and tennis courts, and members were welcome at the Officers Club on the base. Visits to

Library of Congress

typical Arab communities such as the oasis of Qatif and the typical desert towns of Hofuf, Dammam and el Khobar were interesting excursions. Consequently, life in Dhahran, though restricted, was not without compensations. There was, however, little opportunity for contact with local Saudi Arabic speakers, either socially or professionally. After I had been in Dhahran four months, the consulate was visited by a State Department Inspector, who recommended that I be transferred to our Embassy in Jeddah, where I would could make use of my Arabic and increase my proficiency. I was delighted with the prospect, and soon I was off to Jeddah on an Air Force plane.

JEDDAH

We arrived at Jeddah airport around four in the morning, local time. Though we had left Dhahran at a reasonable hour in the morning, we had gone through several time zones. Furthermore, I learned that the Saudis in Jeddah set their clocks on sun time, not Greenwich Mean Time. This difference could be a source of confusion. The Saudis and most of the foreign community reset their watches each day at sundown. A cannon boom announced the beginning of a new day for the Saudis, who set their watches to midnight. The rest of us set our watches at six o'clock in the evening. The Saudi Arabian Airline, flown by American pilots of TWA, operated on Greenwich Mean Time "plus", and the US Air Force, based in Dhahran, used its own GMT based time. Bechtel Corporation, the American construction company doing major work in Jeddah, had its own time, also based on GMT. One had always to be conscious of these different times in scheduling appointments.

The Jeddah airport where we landed consisted of an airstrip and a small shed, which served as ticket office and waiting room. The Bechtel company was already building a large new airport to handle the growing number of annual pilgrims, but it was nowhere in sight at that time. I was met by the Administrative officer of the embassy and, after collecting my footlocker, we proceeded along the dusty road into the city of Jeddah. At that time, Jeddah was a small city of perhaps forty thousand. While the old city wall

Library of Congress

which had defined its limits had recently been torn down, the city had grown very little outside its perimeter. As one approached the city from the airport one was struck by the strange beauty of the place, this vast bulk of tall white buildings huddled together thrusting themselves into the air, gleaming in the intense sunlight. The difference between Jeddah and Dhahran was striking. Here was an old, long established city, so different from the new, artificial community I had just left. Entering the city through what had been a city gate, I felt that I was about to begin a strange and wonderful life in world I could scarcely imagine.

On either side of the road were these four storied, white, balconied structures, leaning over narrow, winding streets, barely wide enough for two donkey drawn carts to pass. Passing through the gate, we drove into a large open square, enclosed on all sides by more of these typical Jeddah residences and arrived at the American Embassy, also a typical Jeddah residence. On one side of the square was the Jeddah hotel, a converted residence, and next to it the "Staff House", where several of the embassy staff were housed. It then being only about four o'clock in the morning local time, the only persons in sight was a group of young Arab laborers engaged in maneuvering a large double-door safe up a flight of steps into the embassy offices.

I was taken by the administrative officer to a building adjoining the chancery, it too a typical Jeddah residence. I was pleasantly surprised to find a spacious living-dining room with ceilings at least fifteen feet in height, and walls paneled roughly in teak wood. The apartment consisted of one large room running the full length of the building. It was furnished at one end with a dining table and chairs, the rest contained a sofa and several upholstered chairs, lamps and small tables. A small alcove at one end held an electric refrigerator and storage space. The apartment opened onto a balcony overlooking the street below, offering a view of the buildings opposite and a truncated view of the Red sea in the distance. Off of the dining room was the small bedroom with bath attached. The

Library of Congress

bedroom held the sole air conditioner of the apartment, the other rooms being cooled by large overhead fans.

As Jeddah had no municipal water supply, water for the bath and the kitchen was pumped up from a water tank located behind the building. The tank was filled daily by a water carrier, who would draw water from his donkey-drawn tank into a gasoline container, which he emptied into the tank. It was then pumped up to the roof. Gravity propelled the water down to the kitchens and bathrooms below when was needed. The source of the water was a distant stream bed or “wadi”, from which water was piped to a central point near the perimeter of the city. There water carriers filled their water tanks and deliver the water throughout the city in their carts, one can at a time. The price per can of water was one riyal, or about thirty cents.

As the kitchens were located on the top floor of the building, the food had to be carried up and down several flights of stairs. Our building, known as Beit Thani, was a typical Jeddah residence. The ground floor was used as a store room, and was largely populated by rats; the second floor contained two apartments similar to mine; the third held my apartment and another; and the fourth, or top floor, contained the kitchens and accommodations for the servants. Our building was connected to the Chancery building by an open balcony. Both buildings were typical Jeddah residences, four stories high, each with a massive entry door of teak wood, beautifully carved in oriental design, and windows and balconies decorated in teak latticework.

Jeddah had no central electricity, and only merchants and a few of the wealthier citizens had generators to provide light and cooling, the general populace relying on oil lamps for lighting and roof-top sleeping for cooling at night. The embassy, like many commercial and foreign establishments, had its own generators, providing electric light and air-conditioning. These generators were located in the square opposite the embassy in the embassy motor pool. A staff of one American and two Italian workers assured us of electric power for our lights and air conditioners. The embassy had one telephone, which was of limited

Library of Congress

utility, the primary mode of communication being messengers. To reach the Foreign Office via telephone a Saudi assistant would furiously turn the crank of the telephone box, shouting "Ya markaz, ya markaz" until the central operator responded. No one else in the embassy was tempted to initiate a telephone call. The streets of Jeddah had no formal names and consequently no street addresses. The location of residence and commercial establishment was the name of the owner. To local Jeddawis, the address of the American Embassy was simply "Beit Batterjy", the house of Mr. Batterjy. Since all mail was sent and received via a central post office, addresses were not needed. Jeddah had no paper currency, business being conducted in gold and silver coin the gold sovereign and the Saudi silver riyal. Maria Theresa thalers were common, as were gold coins of small denominations. Our semi-monthly pay was given to us in bags of Saudi riyals

While each member of the embassy staff had an air conditioner in his bedroom, only the ambassador's office was so equipped. Large overhead fans did the cooling for the rest. While such working conditions would not be acceptable today, in 1949 the lack of air conditioning was not unusual, and we did not consider ourselves particularly deprived. An exception, however was our newly arrived, middle aged Deputy Chief of Mission, who arrived in Jeddah from a comfortable environment in Europe.. He arrived on a hot, steamy day and was shown to his apartment on the second floor of Beit Thani, as it was called. The apartment had been thoroughly cleaned in anticipation of his arrival. Sadly, the day before his arrival, Jeddah experienced a severe sand storm, which took care of the careful cleaning and scrubbing that had been done. Instead of a clean, presentable place to live, he entered a dust filled, dirty apartment. To add to his distress, in the middle of the floor lay the remains of a dead fish, left by a resident stray cat as a welcoming gift.

Despite the lack Western type theaters, restaurants, playing fields, parks or other kinds of public entertainment facilities, there was nevertheless an active social life among the members of the foreign diplomatic and commercial communities. The British and Dutch both had embassies, as did several Middle Eastern countries. There was a substantial foreign business community including the American companies Aramco, Bechtel and

Library of Congress

TWA; the British companies Mitchell-Cotts, Gelatley-Hankey and the Saudi Arabian Mining Syndicate (SAMS); the Dutch had their Bank; and the French maintained a presence via their Banque de l'Indochine. In those days foreigners were permitted to import alcoholic beverages, though it was forbidden to the local Saudis and other Moslems. Consequently, there was considerable partying among the foreign groups. Our ambassador received by diplomatic pouch from the USIS office in Beirut current American films, which were shown on Sunday evenings on the roof of the residence, located a short distance outside the city. Members of the foreign community were welcome at these showings, but local Saudis were prohibited by law from attending.

The import of alcoholic beverages was permitted to embassies and foreign business companies at that time in Saudi Arabia. However, the murder of a British Consul by a young Saudi Prince brought that privilege to an end. The consul had befriended several of the Saudi Princes and socialized with them frequently, alcoholic drinks playing a part in these social activities. One young prince, enraged by the consul's refusal to give him a bottle of whiskey, followed him to his apartment and shot him dead. The King dealt "definitively" with the prince. Until very recently, the import of alcohol was totally forbidden.

The staff of the Embassy consisted of Ambassador J. Rives Childs; political officer and acting Deputy Chief of Mission, Donald Bergus; Deputy Chief of Mission, Heyward Hill; political officers, Hermann Eilts and William Brewer, economic officer Dayton Mak, an administrative officer, two secretaries and three clerks. Though small, it was an efficient and compatible group which worked well in the sometimes difficult environment. All participated in the social activities of the community.

While facilities for recreation were limited, Jeddah had the Red Sea as a source of recreation. Its coral reefs with their underwater vegetation and exotic sea life made trips on the sea a source of pleasure. The fishing was excellent, and the nearby sandy islands were ideal for picnicking, swimming and sunbathing. Some years past, the U.S. Navy had given the embassy a launch, which was a great source of pleasure. The ambassador

Library of Congress

regularly invited members of the staff to accompany him on fishing excursions, and on occasion, they were permitted to take the launch and its one man crew on visits to the islands. Several other organizations had launches, and members of the embassy were invited on outings to the islands. The British firm, Saudi Arabian Mining Syndicate (SAMS), whose compound was located on the outskirts of the city, had two tennis courts, and embassy personnel were welcome to play on these courts. Occasionally SAMS personnel invited members of our staff to pay overnight visits to their gold mining operations in the interior of the province. The British Locust Mission, encamped in the desert a few miles from the city, also likewise invited us to spend the night at their compound and visit their operations in the desert. Picnicking in the desert was also popular.

Social interaction with the local Saudi population was slight and was limited to members of the commercial community, most of whom represented American or European companies. Entertainment by these merchants consisted of typical Saudi dinners, beginning with a ceremonial tea service, followed by a generous spread of roast sheep, chicken, offerings of mounds of variously flavored rice, a variety of vegetables and a local version of yogurt. This feast was followed by a variety of sweets, and ended with Arabic coffee, served in small porcelain cups. These were impressive feasts, and an invitation to them was prized.

While other contacts with the local community were rare, one was free to visit the local shopkeepers and try out one's Arabic language ability. The merchants appeared receptive to conversation of small talk about the weather or other minor subjects and were probably amused by my struggle to make myself understood in my basic Syrian Arabic. One was always welcomed with an offer of tea or coffee. These merchants were tolerant, and I appreciated the chance to exercise my limited language ability.

The American and other foreign ladies in Jeddah were treated to a special kind of entertainment as guests of wives of local Saudi officials. The four wives of the very important (and very rich) Minister of finance entertained the ladies on several occasions. According to an American wife who attended several of these events, the party would

Library of Congress

customarily begin at sundown and continued through the late hours. Saudi ladies, who had arrived wearing the prescribed covering garments, promptly discarded these robes, revealing the latest fashions of Paris and a brilliant collection of fashionable, expensive, jewelry. The ladies would then proceed to dance with one another, presumably dancing to the music of forbidden phonograph records.

King ibn Saud (Abdul Aziz), was the ruler of Saudi Arabia during my stay in the country. Ambassador Childs would occasionally visit the king at his palace in Riyadh, where he preferred to live. On such occasions the ambassador invited a member of the staff to accompany him. The king's court would specify precisely when the ambassador's plane should arrive at the Riyadh airport so as not to disturb the king's rest. Likewise, the plane was not permitted to depart while the king was resting. Upon arriving at the palace, each visitor was given a set of Saudi Arab garments, which were to be worn throughout the visit, which consisted basically of two audiences. The first, a formal or business audience, was held in the kings' "Diwan", a large room whose floor was covered with fine oriental carpets. Three sides of the room were lined with chairs and couches, the king receiving his visitors from a large throne-like chair in the center of the row facing the entryway. The visitor was directed to walk forward and bow slightly as one approached the king. The king indicated where the visitor was to sit. On conclusion of the audience, the visitor backed slowly several paces facing the king before turning and leaving.

The second audience took the form of a huge feast on the roof of the palace, the king and the guests all sitting on the lushly carpeted floor. There the typical Saudi feast was presented. The conclusion of the dinner was signaled by the appearance of attendants carrying water for cleansing ones hands and towels to dry them. This was followed by the appearance of another attendant carrying a pot of incense, or "oud" which was waved over ones Arab garments, leaving them smelling faintly of the Orient. The dinner and audience were finished when the king rose to retire. The following morning as the visitors prepare to depart, each was customarily presented a gift, a fine carpet or perhaps a

Library of Congress

handsome dagger to the ambassador; a watch bearing the king's likeness, to the others. Ambassador Childs customarily declined his gift.

The king's palace in Riyadh was one of several palaces in the city. These tall, massive structures constructed of mud brick and topped with a crenellated roof, fit precisely ones idea of how a desert fort should look. The “city” of Riyadh in 1949 was little more than a large village, mostly low, mud dwellings, a scattering of palm trees, a small bustling market, or “souk”, and the several palaces belonging to members of the royal family. There were no paved streets and no municipal electricity. As in Jeddah, generators provided whatever electricity existed in the city.

Although the king maintained a palace in Jeddah, it was known that he preferred Riyadh, and he rarely visited Jeddah. When he did make a visit there, normal life of the city came to a standstill. As his impressive motorcade progressed from his palace on the outskirts into and throughout the city, the cheering Jedawis were rewarded with gold coins hurled into the crowd by the king's attendants. Members of the small diplomatic corps customarily paid their respects to the king at his Jeddah palace during such visits.

American congressional delegations occasionally visited Jeddah and invariably wished to have an audience with the king. Not wishing to offend the delegation but not wishing to come to Jeddah, the king sometimes sent his brother, Prince Faisal (later King Faisal), to represent him. A typical feast followed the official visit at the Jeddah palace. When the visit was concluded, the American guests could expect to receive handsome souvenirs, often carpets, gold encrusted daggers or swords. There was some feeling among the Saudis that receiving these gifts was the primary purpose of the visits.

The attitude of the people of the Western Province towards the Saudi royal family was somewhat ambivalent. Being merchants and traders, who historically had connections with the outer world, they considered themselves worldly and more cultured than the tribesmen in the Eastern provinces. They tended to look down upon these people, whom

Library of Congress

they considered to be uncouth tribesmen, and they did not share their devotion to the strict Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. Furthermore, there remained in the Hejaz a hint of nostalgia for the Hashemite dynasty, which once ruled the province and had been ousted by the Saudis. That the tribesmen of the Eastern province were the primary benefactors of the country's vast oil wealth rankled a bit.

The laws of Saudi Arabia were religious laws and were strictly enforced by religious police. No radio or phonograph music was allowed, either in public or in private. "Entertainment" at a government social function often consisted of the sung recitation of Koranic verses by a highly revered blind cleric, whose talent was greatly admired. Muslim women were strictly prohibited from driving, although foreign, non-Muslim women were permitted to do so. While women were required to be completely covered when in public, bedouin women from the desert and non-Muslim foreigners were exceptions to the law. The women from the desert walked freely through the streets unveiled, wearing their brightly colored garments festooned with gold bangles and coins. At the hours of prayer, the religious police were on the streets of the market area of the city (the souk) enforcing the law requiring all Saudis to proceed immediately to daily prayers.

No religious service other than Muslim was permitted in the Kingdom. The only Christian service during my stay in Saudi Arabia was held aboard an American naval vessel on an official naval visit to the port of Jeddah. At Christmas-time private celebrations were held in foreign Christian homes, and the British Ambassador organized a caroling group, which visited foreign Christian residences and establishments on Christmas Eve.

Security was not a problem in Jeddah. The punishment for theft was the loss of a hand. The punishment for murder was beheading. My first visit to a local bank was a case in point. Entering the bank shortly after my arrival in Jeddah I found the floor literally covered with gold sovereigns. These hundreds of coins had been flown to Jeddah in small barrels from Cairo and were emptied onto the floor of the bank to be counted by its employees. Though customers walked in and out of the bank, stepping cautiously through the coins,

Library of Congress

no apparent precautions were being taken to make sure that none of them “disappeared”. The employees went calmly about their business of collecting and stacking the coins into counting boards.

Saudi punishment for crimes was severe. The punishment for murder was beheading. One day as I was showing a newly arrived staff member to his quarters in a building in the center of the city, we heard shouting coming from the open square below. Rushing out onto the balcony we saw a large crowd of shouting men encircling a blind-folded and bound man, crouched on his knees before a shallow trench. Suddenly a soldier standing behind the man jabbed the man in the back with his sword causing him to straighten and in one stroke swiftly severed his head. The crowd roared its approval and then quietly dispersed. We learned that the slain man had been convicted of murder. Public stoning was the punishment for a woman convicted of adultery.

One of the few consular problems we western embassies had in Jeddah arose from the Saudi law that no non-Muslim was permitted to enter the holy area in which Mecca was located. This area was clearly marked in some areas but not in others. From time to time an employee of an American firm would wander unintentionally into the proscribed area. While generally he would not be seen by any Saudi authority, occasionally one would be caught and promptly incarcerated in one of the Saudi jails. The process of securing the release of anyone so caught was a long and arduous process. Fortunately, such cases were rare.

The beginning of this proscribed area driving from Jeddah to Mecca was at the oasis of al Hadda, fifteen or twenty miles outside of Jeddah along the road to Mecca. The limit of the forbidden area was marked by a sign in English warning “Non-Moslems Go No Further”. The sign was small, and unfortunately was missed by a group of American men and women taking a drive in the evening to cool off. Although they kept looking for the sign, somehow they missed it, and they proceeded on towards Mecca. Stopped twice by police at two Saudi check points they were waved on after identifying themselves as being

Library of Congress

from the American Embassy. Some miles further upon reaching the summit of low hill there suddenly appeared before them the unmistakable gate of Mecca, and beyond, the lighted hills of the city. In panic, the driver swiftly turned the car and sped back to Jeddah passing unchallenged through the two police check points

Jeddah was not a healthy place to live; dysentery and stomach ailments were common, and unidentified fevers were common. The city had no central sewage system and no public water system. While the embassy apartments were equipped with modern, western toilets, such facilities were rare in the city. Sand boxes served the purpose for most, and one did not ask what happened to the sewage. The embassy was fortunate in having access to the Bechtel company medical facilities, which were housed in the same building in the center of the city in which several embassy staff members were housed. This clinic treated us for ear the infections, amoebic dysentery and other ailment that appeared from time to time. It also operated as a free clinic to the general Saudi public. Dysentery was so common that it was accepted as a normal condition. According to the clinic doctor, a Saudi woman once brought her child to the clinic, frightened because, for the first time ever, the child had passed a firm stool!

The most serious health problem the embassy encountered was on the occasion of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, or the "Hajj". Annually hundreds of thousands of Muslim pilgrims descended on Jeddah, arriving by land, sea and air, to take part in this holy ritual. All pilgrims (or "hajjis") were required to engage a director, who was responsible for their housing and general welfare, and to conduct them through the holy rituals. There being few hotels of any sort in the city, the vast majority of the pilgrims had no place but the open streets to eat sleep and live until passing on to Mecca. These "directors" were also expected to guarantee the departure of the pilgrims after the hajj. Many pilgrims managed to circumvent the rules and remained in the country long after, some because they wished to die in the holy land and others because they didn't have the money for passage home..

Library of Congress

A tragedy occurred during the 1950 pilgrimage involving pilgrims from the Philippines. A Philippine politician had chartered a boat to bring several hundred Muslim pilgrims to Jeddah and provide their return passage. Things went awry shortly after the hajj was completed. The politician did not have sufficient funds to re-charter the ship for the return journey. While attempts to resolve this matter were being made, smallpox broke out among the Philippine pilgrims, prompting the Saudi Arabian health authorities to move the entire Philippine group to the "quarantine island", several miles off the coast in the Red Sea. The epidemic quickly spread throughout the colony of Philippine pilgrims resulting in many deaths. At that time the American Embassy was charged with representing Philippine interests in Saudi Arabia. It was, consequently, the embassy's responsibility to do what ever necessary to provide for the welfare of the stricken people and seek a solution to the situation. The ambassador arranged to visit the quarantine island and see for himself what was being done to help the suffering people. He asked me to accompany him on this visit to the island. After being revaccinated for smallpox, we took off in our launch and toured the makeshift hospital on the island. The suffering there was unimaginable. Rows and rows of helpless victims were lying quietly awaiting death, their bodied covered with pus-filled sores, their faces formless under the hideous scabs. It seemed that little could be done to cure the stricken, and the disease was left to burn itself out. According to the British doctor, everyone on the island was immediately vaccinated for smallpox. Those who had not yet been infected did not catch the disease. Of those who had already contracted the disease, most died. Those who survived were left heavily scarred. As I was transferred back to the United States shortly after my visit to the island, I never knew how many of those poor people died or how many found their way safely back to the Philippines.

As elsewhere throughout the world, the month of Ramadan is an important part of the Muslim faith. With a few exemptions, Muslims must abstain from eating, drinking and sexual activity during the hours between dawn and sunset during this month. The lunar month of Ramadan traditionally began at the appearance of the new moon. In Jeddah,

Library of Congress

the rising and the setting of the sun were signaled by cannon-fire. The cannon at sunset marked the beginning of several hours of feasting, social and business calls and general socializing. While most Saudis were faithful in observing the restrictions, a few did not fast; but these were careful not to be seen. Foreign non-Muslims were welcomed in the homes and offices of friends and acquaintances after the hours of fasting, though they were obliged to be careful not to give offence by any inappropriate activities or conduct. The end of the month of Ramadan was a signal to celebrate with elaborate feasts and entertainment.

The city of Jeddah had little to offer in the way of amenities. There were no local restaurants suitable for westerners. While a limited variety of western canned goods was available in a few small shops, much of our food was imported from Europe. A local meat market existed, and, though the sanitation was appalling, that is where our servants bought the meat that we ate.. There was little in the way of fresh fruits and vegetables. However, we at the embassy were fortunate in that the United States Air Force made weekly trips to Asmara, the capital of Eritrea, and brought back fruits and vegetables for us and for the air base at Dhahran.

Despite the lack of amenities, morale of the embassy staff was surprisingly good. While the climate was hot and very humid throughout the year, the temperature rarely exceeded 95 degrees Fahrenheit. Sand storms were rare. The tour of duty was relatively short, usually a year and a half. The cost of living was low. The pay, with its hardship post supplement, was attractive, and it was hard to find anything on which to spend money. The housing, though basic was adequate, and all were given the opportunity to spend a week or so in Asmara during one's tour. The presence of a considerable number of westerners throughout the foreign commercial and diplomatic community provided a pleasant social outlet. Jeddah's climate was difficult, however. While the winter was short and relatively mild, the rest of the year was hot and very humid, day and night. There were occasional sand storms, though nothing compared to the frequency and intensity of those

Library of Congress

experienced in Dhahran. Occasionally in winter Jeddah would receive a torrential rainfall, practically drowning the city and literally “melting” a number of the mud built buildings.

There was always the unanswered question of whether slavery existed in Jeddah. While a particular building in the market area was said to be the site of a slave market, this could not be verified. It was common knowledge, however, that most of the servants of the local Saudis were from Africa, many of whom were unable to afford passage home after the Hajj. It was understood that all servants were to be treated much as members of the family, though they were not free to leave the service of the family at will.

Women held a special status in Saudi Arabia. They were carefully protected and were limited in social contacts, dress and conduct. All females past a certain age were required to wear the veil, and their heads and bodies completely covered when in public. They were not permitted to drive automobiles, and most were given only limited education. A Saudi woman could not leave the country without her husband's consent, nor could she take any of the couple's children out of the country without the husband's permission. This applied equally to foreign women married to Saudi men. A Saudi man could have as many as four wives, and he could quickly divorce one or all of them. Nevertheless, if he did so, he would have to reckon with the family of the divorced woman and forfeit the “bride price”. Occupying a portion of the square opposite the Embassy was a building known as the home for castoff wives. On particularly hot evenings some of these women could be seen taking the night air on the open roof, covered completely with their black garments.

When I left Jeddah in June, 1950, the city was showing signs of change. Electricity lines were being installed throughout the city, a new airport to handle the burgeoning pilgrim traffic was in progress, the new port was nearing completed, a new, modern air-conditioned hotel was already in operation on the perimeter of the city, and a group of Lebanese physicians were in the process of opening a modern hospital in the city.

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End of interview